JACK STONE OF TAIT SCHOOL

EVERETT T. TOMLINSON

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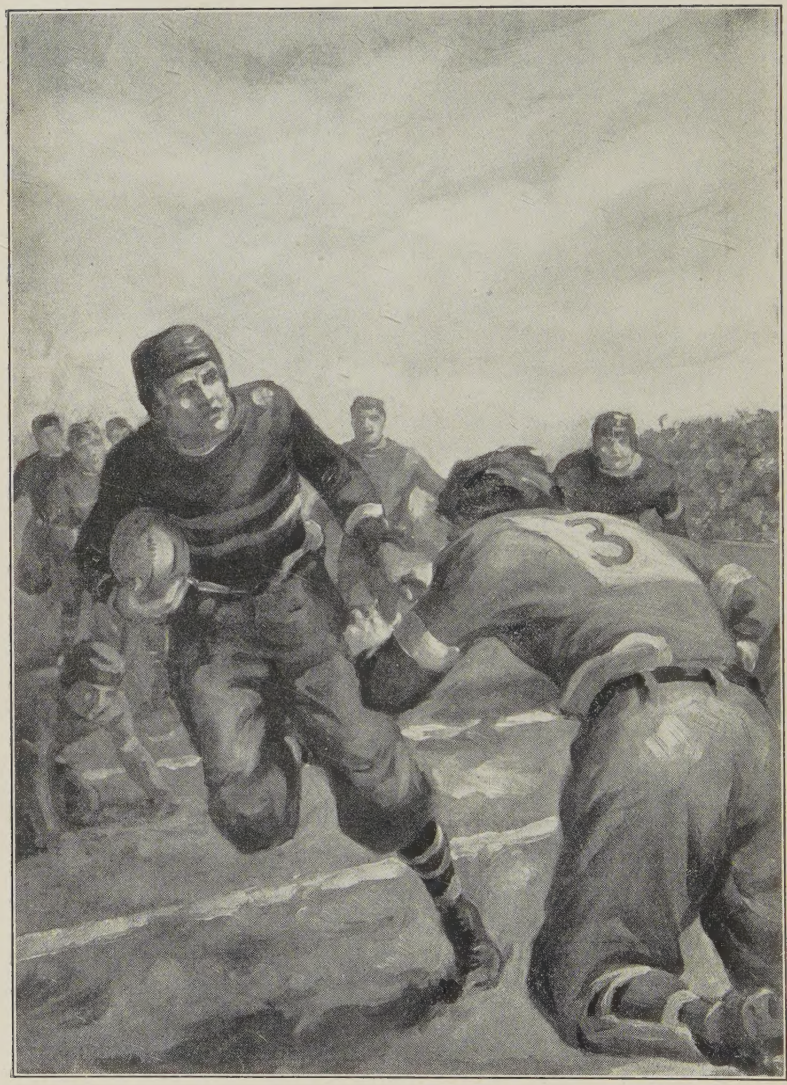

A moment later Stone was seen with the ball under his arm running swiftly toward the goal of his rivals.

(Page 184) *Frontispiece*

JACK STONE
OF
TAIT SCHOOL

BY

EVERETT T. TOMLINSON
Author of "The Pennant," "Carl Hall of Tait,"
"Captain Dan Richards," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY
CHARLES L. WRENN

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THE PENNANT
CAPTAIN DAN RICHARDS
CARL HALL OF TAIT
JACK STONE OF TAIT SCHOOL

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Jack Stone of Tait School

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PREFACE

This is a story of life in a boys' school. Most of the incidents incorporated in this tale are founded upon experiences that were real. A school like Tait provides a little world of its own. Leaders and followers, contests and jealousies are parts of the boy's life as well as of the man's. Wellington is said to have remarked concerning his victorious troops at Waterloo that it was in the great English schools that his soldiers were made.

Two things are essential in the education of every boy: a knowledge of himself which enables him justly to measure his own powers, and a knowledge of the world in which he lives. Without these every man will fail, though with them success may not crown every effort.

No matter how many years have elapsed or how far from the scenes of his school days a man may have gone, he finds in Maine and in California alike the contests, problems, failures and rewards among the schoolboys that are counterparts of those he met in his own boyhood days.

PREFACE

The author has tried not only to tell a story which will interest his young readers, but also to weave in certain lessons without labeling them. The old-fashioned "moral" which adorned the tales written for boys of a generation or more ago has no place in the modern story. And yet every story is a failure which does not help in forming the character of its boyish readers.

The interest in the three preceding stories depicting life in the Tait School have been so cordially received and the call for another story has been so strong that the author has added this tale with the hope that at least some of the interest which was expressed in former stories may be retained in following the adventures of Jack Stone.

EVERETT T. TOMLINSON.

Elizabeth, New Jersey.

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JACK STONE OF THE TAIT SCHOOL

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST PROBLEM

THE Tait School was located in a little village that was nestled among the hills. Indeed, the seven school buildings with their spires and towers rising in the distance above the green of the surrounding trees, appeared to be the center of a great bowl.

At his first glance a visitor might think that the green clad hills shut out the Tait School from the world beyond. The roadways all seemed to run directly into the bases of the nearby or distant hills. Even the smoke of the locomotives did not indicate the opening in the valley where the swiftly flowing little river found its way among the hills beyond. And the railway trains were at least a mile away, even when they stopped at the little Tait station.

The great hills were so high that sometimes they

were termed mountains, although they fell far below the number of feet really required to dignify hills by that term. On the other hand they were so high and in places were so steep that they almost seemed to proclaim that they were higher than the geography declared them to be. Among these hills every Tait boy had climbed and fished, and no one was looked upon as ready to depart from the school "for good and all" unless he had spent at least one night on the top of Grey Mount, the most majestic of all the chain.

The school buildings were scattered along the one street of which the village was composed. Majestic elms in double rows were found on either side of the street, which itself was at least two hundred and fifty feet wide. The houses in which the teachers dwelt, each with a restricted number of boys, for no house was supposed to contain more than twenty pupils besides the family of the teacher in charge, supplemented the main dormitories. There were two of these latter commonly known as East and West Halls. They were large unattractive buildings of brick and stone, both dating from the early days of the school. In recent years many changes had been made in the interior of each so that the rooms were much more attractive than formerly and certainly much more comfortable for the boys who roomed in them.

These two dormitories were restricted to the use of the older boys. The new dignity which was assumed by the boys who had passed out from the "houses," in which they were continually under the oversight of teachers, not even study-hours being free, easily distinguished certain of the older boys from the others.

Tait School was old. It had stood for three generations and there were now enrolled in its student body grandsons of those whose early days and first insight into the temple of learning had been gained when Tait was only a beginner. What a contrast there was between those far-away days and the present. The grounds, and buildings and even the house of the headmaster had been so changed that the former bareness was gone.

In all about two hundred and fifty boys were in attendance, varying in age from the little fellows of the lower forms to the boys of nineteen or twenty, who made up the dignified graduating class. To this day stories and traditions of boys who had been foremost in former days linger and still do their part in influencing and molding the characters of the present schoolboys.

Here it was that Captain Dan Richards,[1] the most famous pitcher the Tait nine ever had produced had had his trials and triumphs. Here it

[1] See Captain Dan Richards.

was that Captain Dan's devoted follower among the younger boys, Carl Hall,[2] was at last succeeded by his own young admirer in the leadership of the school life. The rivalry as well as the jealousy and persecution which Carl had suffered are not parts of this present story.

And here too when this story opens, history was repeating itself as it is reported to have a perpetual tendency to do.

Out of one of the buildings late in the afternoon of the September day a little group of four boys were emerging.

The summits of the everlasting hills were tinged with purple and the shadows of the evening already were creeping along the dark green hillside.

One of the boys, evidently a leader, was a well-developed lad, apparently about seventeen years of age. His face beamed with good-nature and his white teeth were continually seen for it was seldom that the face of Stone was not wreathed in smiles. He did not now much resemble the little fellow who a few years before had been the friend and staunch defender of Carl Hall when the leader had been deposed from his position as captain of the school eleven. From Carl, Stone had heard stories of the wonderful prowess of Dan Richards and how in one game he had struck out seventeen

[2] See Carl Hall of Tait.

of the nine of their rivals of the Military Academy, a school located in a village only nine miles distant.

By the side of Stone, a red-haired, freckled-faced boy, apparently of the age and size of his companion, was walking, and the friendship that existed between the two was apparent from their manifest pleasure at the reunion which had come with the reopening of the school, for Tait School had resumed its work only the preceding week.

Stone and Redhead, as his companion was commonly called, although his name was Price, had been visiting the school house over which Mr. Hull presided. The younger brother of each of these boys, who now were in the final year of their course at Tait, had just entered. Both had been deemed fortunate in being admitted into Mr. Hull's house. The older boys, with all the paternal care which belonged to their advanced position, were doing their utmost to see that the lads were not unduly homesick. Thus far every night before the evening study hour began they had taken the two boys to East Hall where Stone and Price were roommates, and the younger boys had been quick to appreciate the privilege which was theirs.

Stone now was left end and captain of the eleven

and his roommate was what certain pupils, describing his activities on the field, had declared to be a "snake-like" quarter-back.

To be seen in the company of the two heroes of the school life, to say nothing of their personal affection and pride in their older brothers, added much to the comfort of both younger lads. Even to be seen in the presence of the team was an honor not lightly to be despised, while to accompany them to their rooms and to be interviewed in their dormitory was an experience in the eyes of many of the younger boys that was seldom surpassed. Indeed, there are many men to whom possession and what is commonly termed success have come who willingly would exchange it all for the thrill, which has never been repeated, that came to them in their school boy days when they were actually admitted to the friendship of the leaders in the school life.

"Well, how are things going with you?" inquired Stone when the boys at last were seated in his room. "Tell me about your life, Jack."

The younger brother thus bidden said, "It's all right, except when the fellows pour water in your bed."

"Have they done that already for you?" laughed Price.

"Every night since we've been here," explained

Dick, the younger brother of the one who had asked the question.

"What do you let them do it for?"

"We can't help ourselves."

"Now, look here, kid," declared Price quickly. "You're almost as redheaded as I am. I have had to go through all this and I know what I'm talking about. If you don't stop such tricks—"

"But the fellows all say that if you report the trouble to Mr. Hull you'll be a telltale and get it worse than ever."

"Report to Hull?" retorted Price scornfully. "Who said anything about reporting anything to him?"

"Why, you did," said his brother.

"I did nothing of the kind. If you should report a thing like that I should blame the boys if they didn't stack your room, pour water into your beds and tie knots in your clothes."

"But how shall we stop it?" inquired young Stone, who as the roommate of Dick Price was compelled to share in his adventures.

"There's only one way to stop it," said Bob Price sharply.

"What's that?"

"Why, you have got to pay off the fellow that does it. Do you know who he is?"

"I guess so," said Jack hesitatingly.

"Well, who is it?"

"I think it's a boy named Humphrey. He's bigger than we are."

"What's that got to do with it?" demanded Tom Stone scornfully. "Are you going to let every boy that is bigger than you are play any tricks he wants to on you?"

"But I'm afraid we can't stop him," protested Jack.

"Then you deserve all that's coming to you."

"If we pitch into him," suggested Dick Price, "and Mr. Hull finds it out we'll be put on the limits for a month. That will mean we can't leave the grounds during that time."

"I'm not so sure about that," suggested Bob. "Mr. Hull has a way of looking straight up into the sky when some things are going on that he doesn't want to see. I used to be in his house, you know, and I'll never forget some of the things that happened there, as well as some that didn't."

"But this boy Humphrey is the strongest boy in the house."

"Then take him on together," suggested Tom.

"It will be a case of kill or cure," laughed Bob, "but I guess it will be more cure than kill."

"You don't know Humphrey," whined Dick.

"Now look here, kid," said Price, as he turned sharply upon his younger brother, "I don't want

to hear any more of that. Your voice sounds as if you were scared."

"I am," spoke up Dick promptly.

"Well, get over it then, that's my advice. It's the only way there is to protect yourself. You can take your choice whether you want Humphrey to torment you all through your course, or whether you'll turn around now and put a stop to it."

"But we can't stop him," protested Jack. "He was in our room the other day and he threw us both on the bed. When we tried to get up he held us down, one with each hand, and we couldn't help ourselves."

"Then, I guess there's no hope," laughed Bob. "You seem to like that sort of thing and if you do I haven't anything more to say."

"But one of the fellows went to Mr. Hull and told him what Humphrey was doing."

"What happened?" inquired Bob. "Though I guess I can tell you without saying a word."

"Why Mr. Hull gave him the limits for a week and then Humphrey gave it to Ayers for telling on him."

"Well, I have given you all the advice I can," said Tom. "You've got your own choice to make, as well as your own way. If things get too bad you can come to us, but unless they do, you might just as well face the music now as any time. You

mustn't come to us for any sympathy though, for you'll be worse off if it is reported that we're taking your part and helping you out, than it will be if you try to fight your own battles and lose. You think Humphrey is the only bully in the school? Now let me tell you that there's always a Humphrey here, and there will always be a Humphrey just as long as you live whether you're in the Tait School or not. Now it's up to you what you'll do."

CHAPTER II

IN HUMPHREY'S ROOM

WHEN the younger boys departed from Stone's room Redhead said to his roommate, "I'm almost afraid that we've got those kids into trouble."

"I guess not," said Stone quietly. "What we have told them to-night is just the way to keep out of it."

"Not keep out of it, but get out of it, perhaps."

"It's all one."

"Not quite. They haven't learned the ropes here yet and they don't know just how much they can do. It would be just like that rascally little Dick to go back to Hull House and pitch into that bully all alone. What did he say the name of the fellow is?"

"Humphrey," replied Stone. "Don't you know him? He's big enough to try for the eleven, but if we should once let him on the field he would tell you and me and the coach and everybody connected with the team just how we ought to play the game."

"Oh, I know the fellow you mean," laughed Price. "He's that moonfaced chap, who falls down about three times every time he tries to walk across the campus. He carries his head so high that he almost bumps the stars. His face looks as if it had struck the moon some time and left the print on a big piece of putty of the old gentleman that lives up there."

"You have a weakness for Humphrey, I see," laughed Stone.

"Well, all I can say is I'm afraid that those kid brothers of ours, Dick and Jack, will get into trouble because we have told them that the only way they can protect themselves is to show Humphrey that they are not afraid of him. But he must weigh one hundred and sixty pounds and those little fellows together won't weigh much more than that."

Price spoke more truly than he knew. On their way back to Hull House the two younger boys, thrilled by the words of their older brothers, decided that they would act upon the advice which had been given them and do their best to make Humphrey cease his annoying attentions.

"I suppose he will half kill us," suggested John, "but I would about as soon be treated that way as to have to sleep between wet sheets and have to untie the knots in my stockings every morning."

"There he comes now," suddenly whispered Dick as the bully turned into the pathway along which they were walking. "He sees us! Come on, let's get out of this!"

"No, sir, I'm not going to show him I'm afraid," said Jack sturdily.

A moment later Humphrey discovered the two younger boys and quickly approaching them, said, "Come up to my room you two kids, I have got something I want you to do."

"What is it?" demanded Dick.

"Oh, it's something nice," laughed Humphrey. "I don't want to tell you now because you would lose half the fun if I did. You just come along with me like good little boys and I'll see that you have a good time."

"I can't do it now," said Dick, "and I don't believe Jack can either."

"Oh, yes, you can," laughed Humphrey as he seized each boy by his wrist.

Almost as if they were acting by a preconceived plan both of the younger boys instantly flew at their tormentor and began lustily to kick his feet and legs.

"Ouch!" roared Humphrey. "Quit that, you little brats!"

The bully's hands were fully occupied in preventing his two prisoners from escaping and it

was therefore impossible for him to protect himself fully from the vicious attacks of the boys.

At last angered by the pain he was suffering and mortified by the shouts of laughter that came from some of his classmates waiting on the steps of the Hull House, he angrily threw the boys from him and both fell to the ground. Before they could rise he seized Jack and began to kick and punch him so savagely that the boys called loudly upon him to desist.

Angered beyond his power to control himself fully Humphrey disregarded the warnings of his classmates and continued his abuse of the little fellow, who now was helpless in his hands.

A moment later, however, he was thrown violently upon the ground while Jack Stone, doing his utmost to keep back the tears of pain and rage which welled up in his eyes, was prepared to renew his vicious attack.

"Better let well enough alone, kid," laughed one of the older boys. "Go on to your rooms. Don't bother with this fellow any more."

"I'll pay you for this. I'll pay you for this," roared Humphrey helpless in the hands of the boys who had seized him and held him on the ground where he was prevented from rising.

"Just wait until I get my hands on you," he shouted.

Both Dick and Jack, more frightened than either was willing to acknowledge to the other, quickly fled toward their dormitory and speedily mounting the stairs entered their room and shut the door.

"There aren't any locks on our doors," groaned Dick.

"I guess he won't try to hurt us in the building," suggested Jack.

"No, but he'll do just what he says and will pay us back sometime when he catches one of us alone."

"Why don't we get a dozen of the fellows in our class to do something to him before he has any chance?"

"What can we do?"

"We can pay him off," exclaimed Jack whose face was somewhat discolored from the blows of the angry bully.

"Yes, but what?"

"Let's get a rope," suggested Jack, "and when he's in his room we can get a dozen of our fellows to go up there and tie him fast to the bed before he knows what has happened."

"Let's see if the fellows will do it," answered Dick eagerly. "Let's do it right away. We don't want to be served any more the way you have been."

"And I don't want any more myself," declared Jack, his eyes shining with anger as he spoke.

"That's what your brother and mine said we must do anyway. It's half an hour to dinner time. Let's go out now and see if we can't get some of the fellows to join us."

Quickly leaving their rooms the boys sought their friends, most of whom were in the same class with them and as a result of their appeal, within five minutes nine boys had agreed to serve on a "committee" as it was termed.

"Come on," whispered Dick, who now was the recognized leader. "We'll all go up to Humphrey's room and hide there. He will be coming in pretty soon and then we'll go for him."

"But he would throw us out one by one," protested Jack.

"I guess not," said Dick confidently. "We'll have it all fixed. Here, you Charlie Long," he said, turning to one of the boys in the assembly which had met under one of the great trees on the lawn, "you get three others besides yourself, who are to jump for Humphrey's legs the minute he comes into the room. I'll be right there by the door and the minute he sees me or Jack, he will rush in. Then I'll close the door and before he knows what is going on I'll grab one of his hands and Jack must grab the other."

"But you'll need more than two," suggested Tom Rose.

"All right, Tom, you help me, and, Solomon Jeremiah Levinsky, you must turn the whole length of your ears and all your claws on the hand Jack is to grab. Then we'll drag him to the bed and every fellow is to hang on to the hand or foot he has taken hold of."

"What will you do with him when you get him on the bed?" demanded Solomon, who was one of the younger boys and the only one of Jewish parentage enrolled in the school.

"We'll tie him there."

"Yes," spoke up Jack, "and we'll tie him so fast and hard that he won't get out until it's time for breakfast."

"That's a good scheme," said Charlie, "—if it can be worked."

"Of course it can be worked," said Dick confidently. "All we have to do is to make the rush on him together just as soon as I close the door, and then if every fellow does his part we'll have him tied up in no time."

"But he may yell," said Jack.

"Let him yell," retorted Dick. "He may find out though pretty soon that that won't do him any good. We'll put a pillow over his head or tie a handkerchief around his mouth."

"I'll tell you what I'm going to do," said Jack Stone feelingly.

"All right, go ahead and tell us," said Dick.

"I'm going to pour a pailfull of water on his head after we have got him strapped down to the bed."

"Better wait until we get him before you douse him with water," laughed Charlie.

"We'll never do either if we don't get ready pretty soon," spoke up Dick. "I say that we all of us go up to his room right now. He rooms with Ayers, who is the worst telltale in the school. He hasn't got strength to run down hill."

"That's the reason he rooms with Humphrey," replied Charlie.

"May be it is, but more likely it's because he thinks the great blackguard will protect him and let him keep up all the little petty mean things he's doing to the other fellows."

"Don't you think we'd better have a fellow stand in each end of the corridor?" inquired Jack.

"What for?" said Dick.

"To give us warning if any of the teachers come along."

"The only teacher up there," said Dick scornfully, "is Pussyfoot, and he won't come around until after dinner."

"Maybe he won't," acknowledged Jack, "but if he does come you won't know anything about him before he gets there. He's worse than a Gumshoe."

Pussyfoot and Gumshoe were terms applied by the younger boys to one of the younger teachers who had a part of their immediate oversight. Frequently, or at least so the boys declared, this teacher stole noiselessly along the corridors, hoping to overhear or overtake some one who might be brought before him later as a culprit. Doubtless the prejudice of the boys was unwarranted, but whether it was or not the two terms which served to indicate to the excited boys the supposed attitude of certain of the teachers had clung to the men until they were more commonly used than the names to which they were justly entitled.

Meanwhile the boys had assembled in Humphrey's room and a watch had been established near the window at the end of the corridor to report when Humphrey was seen approaching the building.

Not many minutes had elapsed when the excited guard ran swiftly to Humphrey's room, now occupied by his enemies, and in a loud whisper reported, "He's coming. He'll be here in less than two minutes."

"Come in then and shut the door," ordered Dick.

The young boys arranged themselves in two rows so that the door would open directly between them. Their plan was to seize their enemy before he was fully aware of their presence or intentions. In this way by taking him off guard they were hopeful that they might be able to overcome the great physical strength which undoubtedly Humphrey possessed.

"Here he comes! Here he comes!" whispered Dick, his excitement increasing rapidly as he spoke.

Footsteps were heard in the corridor and the excited boys waited breathlessly for the bully of the house to appear.

Only a few minutes had elapsed before the approaching footseps were no longer heard and every boy was convinced that Humphrey had stopped a moment before the door of his room and that he was about to enter.

CHAPTER III

THE ATTACK

A TENSE silence instantly fell over the room. As the boys glanced at one another it was plain that some of them were greatly frightened. Jack Stone was the only one in the entire company who apparently was unmindful of their peril.

There was slight time, however, for consultation, for a moment later the door slowly opened and it was evident that Humphrey was about to enter. It was plain too that the bully was unsuspicious of the reception which had been planned for him.

The door, however, had been only partly opened when he suddenly caught sight of the inmates of his room. For a moment he hesitated as if he was uncertain what to do. Before he decided, two of the boys who had been stationed as guards in the corridor, silently approached and exerting their strength to the utmost pushed Humphrey into the room.

The unexpected assault almost threw the bully

off his feet. He struggled forward and before he could recover his position the two scouts entered the room, the door was slammed to and instantly all the younger boys flung themselves upon the bully, before he was aware either of the attack or what he must do to defend himself.

The boys were as nimble as a pack of monkeys. Their carefully arranged plan was not forgotten and without waiting for any further directions the little fellows flung themselves upon the feet and hands of their enemy.

Humphrey, however, quickly recovered from his surprise and as he became aware of the attack he instantly threw himself with all his strength into the struggle.

Hampered and partly held by the boys whose grip was tenacious he struck and kicked in all directions. Dick Price received full in his face the force of one of his hardest blows. In a moment his face was bleeding, and yet in spite of his suffering the little fellow again advanced and threw himself with the others upon Humphrey, who now had been brought to his knees.

Several times Humphrey, who was, as we know, a powerful lad, succeeded in throwing off several of his enemies, but in every case they came back with redoubled fury.

The room was filled with confusion. The noise

of the struggle, if the boys had stopped to think of the fact of their frantic attack, must have been heard in every part of the house. Chairs had been broken as the mass of struggling contestants swayed back and forth in the room. Occasionally shouts arose while the labored breathing of all who were engaged in the contest added to the din.

In spite of his utmost endeavors, however, Humphrey was unable to shake off his tormentors. Up to this time Dick had been the only one to receive any serious injury and his bleeding face now added to the unseemliness of the desperate attack.

Humphrey's strength, however, was beginning to fail him. He was breathing heavily and the expression in his eyes betrayed the fact that he was steadily becoming weaker.

At last, after he had been forced to the floor and several of his impish tormentors had succeeded in holding down his legs and arms, Jack abruptly turned to the rope which had already been prepared and slipping the noose over the feet of their prostrate enemy he speedily drew it taut.

The combined efforts of three of the boys served to draw the noose more tightly as the rope was also cast around a post of the bed.

Aware now that unless he did something more he was likely to be entirely helpless, Humphrey renewed his endeavors to escape. Several times he

threw off two of his tormentors, but each time they came back to the fray with renewed determination.

The efforts of the boys to place the rope around the hands and arms of Humphrey for a long time proved unavailing. At last, however, a noose was slipped over his right hand and without waiting to complete their project instantly two of the boys released their hold upon the bully and together seized the ropes.

Pulling with all their united strength they drew the struggling boy close to the bed. One hand, however, was still free and with this he struck wildly at his enemies. Fortunately no one was injured and his helplessness was increased when a few moments later his left hand also was forced into the noose which again was drawn tightly and quickly Humphrey was helpless in the presence of the attacking party.

The boys, however, were unable to lift their fallen foe upon the bed.

"There's no use, fellows," whispered Jack. "We can't do it unless we set him free."

"Tie him fast here then," said Dick, and in response to his suggestion Humphrey, still struggling to free himself, was drawn close to the bed and the rope was speedily made fast on the opposite side and he was unable even to touch the knots.

"That's all right," said Jack. "We can't do much more, but there's one thing I'm going to do."

Hastily seizing a large pitcher in the room he ran into the corridor filled the utensil with water and then silently and swiftly returned.

"Now, then," he said to Humphrey, who glared at him from the floor. "I'm going to give you a taste of your own medicine. I'm going to let you see how good it is."

As he spoke Jack slowly poured a stream of water into the face of his enemy.

"Will you stop putting water in my bed?" he demanded a moment later as he paused in his operations.

"I'll do more than that," sputtered Humphrey.

"All right then, we might as well get our money's worth here as anywhere," retorted Jack, as again he began to pour a stream into the face of the fallen Humphrey.

Several times he stopped and repeated his inquiry, but Humphrey made no response.

"If you'll agree not to pour any more water in my bed and not tie any more knots in my clothes I'll quit," exclaimed Jack.

Before Humphrey could reply, even if he had been minded to do so, there abruptly was heard a knocking on the door.

Instantly silence fell over the band and every

face was turned in the direction from which the unexpected sound had come.

"Open! Open, young gentlemen!" said the voice of the visitor.

"It's Pussyfoot," whispered Dick excitedly. "What shall we do?"

"There isn't anything to do but open the door," said Jack glumly.

Hesitatingly and yet aware that the demand for the door to be opened must be obeyed, Dick cautiously slid back the bolt and opened the door a few inches.

"Who's there? What do you want?" he demanded.

"I want to come in," explained Mr. McCann, the teacher who was known as Pussyfoot among the boys for his silent methods of discovering the culprits in the Tait School.

At last the door was opened sufficiently wide to enable Mr. McCann to enter. As he advanced he discovered for the first time the body of Humphrey on the floor.

Startled by the unexpected sight, in his shrillest tones Mr. McCann demanded, "What's this? What's the meaning of this, young gentlemen?"

The assembled boys glanced foolishly at one another but no one answered the question.

"I repeat what I said," again began Mr. Mc-

Cann. "I wish to be informed what is going on here. What is the meaning of all this confusion? Why are these shouts and calls?"

Still no answer was made by the frightened boys and then Mr. McCann advanced to the side of Humphrey and speedily released him from the bonds by which he was held.

"What is the meaning of this, Humphrey?" again demanded the teacher. "I have heard these distressing sounds for several minutes, but I had no suspicion that they were issuing from your room."

Humphrey glanced about the room and the expression he saw on the faces of his tormentors apparently angered him beyond control. Still, however, he did not answer the question which had been asked him and again Mr. McCann demanded that the cause and meaning of the confusion should be explained to him.

At last squirming and turning Humphrey said, "These boys came into my room planning to pour water in my bed and tie knots in my clothing."

"Is that true, young gentlemen?" demanded Mr. McCann, as he again turned to the younger boys.

"No, sir, it isn't," spoke up Jack promptly. "We didn't come here to do any such thing."

"What then did you come for?"

"To get even with Humphrey."

"You have taken strange methods to accomplish your purpose," said Mr. McCann in his shrill tones, his face flushing a dull red as he spoke. Responsible for the discipline of the corridor as he was Mr. McCann was aware of the criticism that would be forcefully expressed by Dr. Hull, the teacher in charge of the house.

Apparently angered beyond control by the recollection of the treatment he had received and ignoring the presence of the teacher who was responsible for the corridor, Humphrey turned threateningly upon the angry boys. "I'll see that every one of you gets all he deserves for this," he shouted. "You'll wish you never had come to Tait School."

"We're not doing any more to you than you did to us, Humphrey," spoke up Dick boldly.

"That doesn't make any difference!" shouted Humphrey in his loudest tones. "You'll wish you had never heard of the Tait School before I am done with you. Just look at me! Look at me!" he added, turning to the teacher, as he spoke. "These boys have poured water on me and tied me to the bed-post, and if you hadn't come along just when you did I don't know what else would have happened to me. Where is Ayers?" he added abruptly.

"He isn't here," explained Jack quietly. "Probably he is off doing some more of your dirty work."

"Now, boys," said Mr. McCann, clasping his hands as he spoke and glancing almost helplessly at the vigorous lads before him, "I want the names of all who are here." As he spoke he took a small note book and pencil from his pocket and rapidly jotted down the name of every boy in the room. "This is likely to prove a very serious affair, young gentlemen," he said, as he thrust his note book and pencil back into his pocket. "I shall report this matter to the faculty and I'm sure that it will not fare well with some of you when Dr. Hull hears what I shall tell him."

"Go ahead, telltale!" shouted Dick in his anger.

A dull red crept over the face of Mr. McCann, and his impotent rage was manifest to every boy in the room.

"Indeed I shall report this also to the head master," added the teacher. "And I am quite confident, young gentlemen, that Dr. Hull will not look kindly upon your disgraceful actions. I fancy every boy will be put on the limits and that some of you will be sent for by him for your misbehavior. Now, Humphrey, if you are willing to tell me," he added, "who the leaders are I shall be glad to have their names."

Silently Humphrey glanced about the room, but even his brutality was not quite equal to the task. Doubtless it was not so much the fear of being called a telltale as it was fear of what might befall him if he revealed the names of some of his tormentors. In spite of his strength and size it was plain to every boy that Humphrey was quite unwilling to ignore the glances of anger which were cast upon every side.

"Again I am asking you," said Mr. McCann, "who the leaders in this outrageous action are. You must know, Humphrey, and I am waiting for you to tell me."

CHAPTER IV

REPORTED

FOR a brief interval Humphrey hesitated and was silent. At last he said slowly, "I wasn't here when the boys came in so I can't tell who were the ring-leaders."

"Did they come into your room before you entered it?" inquired Mr. McCann in surprise.

"Yes," growled Humphrey. "They were here when I opened the door. I didn't know anything about it until I found all these little imps inside my room and ready to jump on me when I wasn't prepared to defend myself."

A derisive groan arose from the younger boys and, thoroughly angered by the sound, Humphrey turned savagely upon his unwelcome visitors. However he quickly controlled himself and turned again to face the teacher.

"Oh, yes, I think I comprehend now the conditions more clearly," said Mr. McCann. "As I understand it, these boys broke into your room—"

"We didn't have to break in, Mr. McCann," interrupted Dick. "The door wasn't locked and

we just came in. That's the way Humphrey does in our rooms, so we thought that we would try it with his."

"As I was saying," resumed Mr. McCann, "I fancy I understand now why you cannot give me the names of the ring-leaders. All these boys were in your room when you entered and of course you cannot tell who devised the plot."

"That's right, Mr. McCann," said Humphrey quickly.

"You will save much trouble for yourselves as well as for others if you will inform me who were the leaders in this disgraceful affair," said Mr. McCann, turning once more to the younger boys. No one volunteered however, to impart the desired information and after a brief delay Mr. McCann departed. Before he left the room, however, ne had taken the names of all the boys including Humphrey and ordered them to report to Dr. Hull, the housemaster, in his office at seven o'clock that night.

After the departure of the teacher the boys stared foolishly at one another, some of them manifestly fearful that Humphrey was about to renew the battle. The bully, however, did not advance upon his foes. Seating himself upon the side of his bed he glared savagely at his visitors and then said, "If you kids haven't anything more

to do my advice to you is to get out! Every one of you."

The younger boys at once acting upon the suggestion quickly slid out of the room, glancing apprehensively behind them as they passed through the doorway.

A change of some kind had come over Humphrey for he made no attempt to hasten the departure or to visit his anger upon any of his recent visitors.

Out in the corridor the excitement of the younger boys however, blazed forth anew.

"We have taught him a lesson anyway," said Jack confidently. "I don't believe the big bully will ever try to bother us again."

"You don't know what you're talking about," said Ayers, who at that moment had been passing through the hall and had stopped at the sight of the assembly. "I wouldn't be in the shoes of any of you. You won't be very much older before Humphrey will have you eating out of his hand. He will never forgive you for this trick you played on him this afternoon."

"We didn't play any trick on him," declared Jack indignantly. "All we did was to go in there and make him promise that he wouldn't pour any more water on our beds or tie any more knots in our clothes."

"You didn't make him promise any such thing,"

declared Ayers promptly. "I'm giving you fair warning that you'll be sorry for what you've done."

"If we are," spoke up Dick quickly, "then that big bully will be still more sorry."

"Why will he be?" demanded Ayers.

"If he didn't learn anything this afternoon then it's because his big head is like a pumpkin. I never heard of very much brains being inside a pumpkin shell."

"Have you been over and blabbed to your brothers?" said Ayers, staring intently as he spoke at Dick and Jack.

"Why?" retorted Jack.

"Because if you have you'll get it worse than ever. There isn't anything that makes the fellows so mad as to have any of the boys in the lower forms turn telltales. We had a fellow here last year who had a brother in East Hall and every time the little chap got into a fracas he ran away and hid in his brother's room. Then his brother took up the cudgels for him, but that only made matters worse and I'm telling you straight that the poor fellow had to leave school before the end of the year."

"Why did he have to leave?" demanded Jack.

"Because the place got too hot to hold him.

And it will be the same with you if you carry your tales to Redhead and Stone."

"Yes," suggested Jack, "but suppose Redhead and Stone came over here and asked us if Humphrey is trying to bully us?"

"Don't tell them," said Ayers laconically.

"Why not?"

"Because it will be all the harder for you. Humphrey is all right. If you behave yourselves you'll find he will be as good a friend to you as he is to me."

A derisive groan arose from all the boys at Ayers' statement. As has been said it was currently reported in the school that Ayers roomed with Humphrey in order to secure the protection of the larger boy in return for which he was supposed to do many things for his defender.

The younger boys passed on down the hall, but near the end of the corridor they halted once more and angrily discussed the part which Mr. McCann had taken in their detection.

"He had his gumshoes on, all right," declared Dick.

"He's a regular old Pussyfoot," spoke up Charlie Long. "He comes creeping around when no one suspects him and peeks through keyholes and listens at the doors. I caught him yesterday

hiding behind the door in the end of the hall."

"What was he hiding for?" asked Ayers.

"If you don't know, I can't tell you," retorted Charlie. "You ought to know if there is anybody in the school that understands."

"What do you mean?" demanded Ayers, glancing threateningly at the younger boy as he spoke.

"I mean just what I said."

"I thought you meant something else," said Ayers turning away, an action which was immediately followed by loud jeers from the group.

Ayers, however, did not turn back and proceeded at once to the room which he shared with Humphrey.

In spite of the loud tones of their voices it was evident that most of the ill-feeling had disappeared. Among boys of the lower forms it was well-nigh impossible for any one long to retain a "grouch." The meeting with the bully had taken place and although Dick still bore traces of the conflict, when the end had been achieved the assembly apparently was satisfied with what it had been able to accomplish.

Promptly after supper the guilty parties were all summoned to the office of Dr. Hull. Even Humphrey was present and his attitude was not one that promised any good for the younger boys. He refused to accept a seat and standing in one

corner of the room he towered head and shoulders above the other boys that were present.

The master of the Hull House, who had held his position many years was deeply beloved by all the boys. Indeed some of them were sons of those who in former years had been pupils of the good man. And it was chiefly because of their reverence for Dr. Hull that they had sent their sons to be under his influence. His snow-white hair, his venerable form, his deep and mellow voice as well as the twinkle that seemed to be lingering in his eyes, all combined at this time to impress the culprits that had been summoned into his presence.

"I fancy we are all here," said Dr. Hull, glancing inquiringly at Mr. McCann as he spoke.

"Yes, sir," responded the teacher. "I have checked them up and every boy is here."

"Now then," continued the headmaster, "tell me just what occurred."

"I found all these young gentlemen," began Mr. McCann, "in Humphrey's room. It seems they had been waiting for his return there and when he entered they all fell upon him. I do not know when I have heard such astonishing noises, or have known the quiet of Hull House to be so broken as it was this afternoon. It was not only disorderly but disgraceful. The boys had thrown

Humphrey upon the floor and had bound his feet and hands."

"What do you advise, Mr. McCann?" said Dr. Hull, his eyes twinkling as if somehow he had failed to see the disgrace in the disorderly company in the light in which his teacher had looked upon it. The contrast between the housemaster and the teacher was very marked and not one of the boys failed to note it.

"What do you advise, Mr. McCann?" again inquired Dr. Hull. "What punishment shall be given these boys?"

"Dr. Hull," spoke up Dick impulsively, "don't you think we have a right to be heard before any punishment is given us?"

"Indeed I do," said the teacher, smiling as he spoke. "I shall be glad to hear your side of the story."

"We haven't very much to say," stammered Dick, who now was somewhat abashed as the eyes of his schoolmates were all turned upon him, and besides he had noticed a glance of fear or anger from Humphrey who had been silent throughout the interview.

"There wasn't anything very bad," said Dick. "We didn't know we were breaking any rules. We must have made a good deal of noise, but no one thought of it at the time."

"I am quite well aware of that," said Dr. Hull. "Of course this is the first offense."

"Yes," spoke up Mr. McCann, "but you must remember that school has just opened. They have not done anything before because there wasn't any time to do it in. They took the first chance they could get."

"Quite likely you are correct," said Dr. Hull quietly. "Now what punishment do you suggest?"

For a moment Mr. McCann hesitated and then smiling inanely upon the assembly he said, "I advise that this time you merely warn them. I do not want to be unduly severe and yet I was very much annoyed not to say angry at the actions of the young gentlemen, but I'm willing to forgive them this time, provided the disgraceful act is not repeated."

"And you are quite satisfied?" inquired Dr. Hull.

"Indeed I shall be. I wish to be merciful as well as just."

"Very well, boys," said the head master. "I do not see that there is anything more to say tonight, but I sincerely hope you will remember what you have heard here and that hereafter you will be more careful to obey the rules of the Tait School."

As the boys filed out of the office strange as it may seem, instead of rejoicing, a feeling of indignation began to manifest itself.

"Old Gumshoe thought he was going to book-lick us," said Dick disgustedly.

"That's right," spoke up Jack. "I never had any use for a teacher who didn't make me mind. He thought he was going to make us like him better; but we don't, any of us. We all deserve some punishment and every one knows he does. If we had got what we deserved we wouldn't have complained. I don't just understand what Mr. McCann is driving at."

"You don't know Pussyfoot," spoke up Charlie. "You have just entered. I was here all last year and I can tell you some things you don't know. Every fellow likes Dr. Hull just because he holds him up to the mark. There isn't one of us though that has any use for old Gumshoe."

However, none of the boys cherished any ill-will for their teacher, and as the regular routine and work of the school began the following day, their thoughts speedily were diverted to other channels. To the surprise of Dick and Jack, Humphrey apparently ignored their presence. Not once had he come to their room when a week had elapsed nor had their beds been molested or knots been tied in

their clothes. Somewhat puzzled by the failure of Humphrey to resume his former attacks, neither boy was prepared for the events which soon followed.

CHAPTER V

A DISCOVERY

SEVERAL days elapsed, however, before the younger boys were made aware of the plans which their recent tormentor had been forming. The early days of the school required almost their undivided attention to the work which was being assigned. Classes were being organized, study hours arranged and the various books and equipment necessary for the work of the coming year were to be obtained.

Several times Jack and Dick had talked over their recent experience with Humphrey. The fact that Dr. Hull had taken the escapade somewhat lightly, instead of inciting the boys to do more had caused them to appreciate more fully the kindness of the man. Their feeling of respect for him was in no way lessened and both were aware that if either again should venture to violate the rules of the school he would receive punishment that was swift and sure.

When a week had elapsed and Humphrey had not once visited the room of the two boys they

began to congratulate themselves that their troubles were ended. Whereby they disclosed to others if not to themselves the fact that their lack of experience in school life was still a barrier to certain things.

When the afternoon study-hour, a week after the attack in Humphrey's room had occurred, had been dismissed, both Jack and Dick hastened to their own room to leave their books and start for the football field. Already the school team was working busily under the direction of the coach and a part of every afternoon was devoted by the younger boys to watching the school eleven at its work. There were teams for the younger boys as well, but in spite of their zeal and interest in their own games the thoughts of the Tait boys were centered largely in the prospects of the school eleven.

"Hurry up, Dick," called Jack as he started down the corridor. "We'll be late."

"Come back here," shouted his roommate. "I want to show you something."

"I haven't time," retorted Jack.

"Yes, you have time! Come back here. You must come."

The tone of his roommate's voice as much as what he had said caused Jack reluctantly to turn back and when he entered the room somewhat

testily he said, "What is it? I don't want to stay here very long."

"Look at that, will you?" said Dick in a low voice.

Advancing to the beds Dick threw back the sheets and in a moment Jack saw that some one had been drenching them with water.

All the sheets and blankets were as wet as if they had been soaked in a tub.

"What do you think of that?" demanded Dick.

For a moment his roommate was silent and then said, "I am sure of one thing."

"What's that?"

"Humphrey didn't do it."

"What makes you think so?"

"I don't know, but I don't believe he did,—that is, directly."

"Who did it then?"

"Hold on. You wait here a minute." Darting hastily from the room Jack ran to the floor below and stopped before the room occupied by Humphrey and Ayers. In response to his rap the door was opened and Ayers stood before him.

"Where's Humphrey?" demanded Jack.

"He isn't here," replied Ayers. "He's a sub this year on the school eleven. He's probably down on the gridiron."

"That's all right, then, you'll do almost as

well," said Jack quickly. "Come on, I want to show you something."

"Sorry, but I can't come now. What do you want me to see?"

"Yes, you can come," said Jack sharply, glancing threateningly at the boy before him as he spoke.

"What is it you want me to see?"

There was something in the manner of Ayers that convinced his visitor that he was not all together ignorant of the sight which he was prepared to show him. This conviction strengthened his determination to carry out the plan he had formed.

"You come with me, and I'll show you what it is," said Jack sturdily, grasping Ayers by his arm as he turned to leave the room.

"I don't want to go," pleaded Ayers. "You let go of me."

"But I want you to come," said Jack more determined than ever that his classmate should obey his directions.

"I'll tell Humphrey on you," whined Ayers. "You know what he will do."

"If you do tell then we might as well be hung for sheep as lambs. You have got to come with me whether you want to or not."

Plainly alarmed by the command Ayers suddenly screamed in his loudest tones.

So startled was he by the action of his classmate that Jack for a moment was tempted to run from the place. In a moment, however, he recovered his courage and throwing his arm tightly around the neck of Ayers he compelled the latter to go with him into the corridor and at the same time prevented him from repeating his calls for help.

Meanwhile Dick had heard the cry and had run swiftly into the corridor of the floor below. As soon as he entered he discovered his roommate and running swiftly to his side he said, "What's wrong, Jack? What is it?"

"I have invited this chap to see something I want to show him. It's in our room."

"That's right," said Dick instantly comprehending the purpose of his friend. "You come along, Ayers, and don't make any more noise about it either."

"I'm going to tell Humphrey," whined Ayers again.

"That's all right," said Jack. "I told him if he was going to tell Humphrey we might as well get all we could out of him before Humphrey took it out of us. Will you come along without any trouble?" he added, pausing a moment in his efforts to push Ayers through the hallway.

"No, I'll not," screamed Ayers. "I shall not

go with you. I'm going to tell Humphrey what you're doing to me."

"Pick him up, Dick," said Jack. "You take him by the legs and I'll help with his arms. If he says anything more he will be sorry for it."

The tone of Jack was such that Ayers was thoroughly alarmed. He made no outcry while his two classmates carried him swiftly through the corridor and up the stairway and entering their own room they dropped him on the floor and closed the door.

"I'm not going to stay here," whined Ayers. "I tell you you'll be sorry for this! What is it you want to show me anyway?"

"I want you to look in our bed," said Jack quietly.

"What's wrong with your beds?" demanded Ayers.

"You look and you'll see."

"It looks as if somebody had poured water in them," said Ayers a moment later.

"You guessed right the first time," said Dick glibly. "Now then, I'm going to give you another guess. Who poured the water in them?"

"Do you say I did it?" cried Ayers.

"I didn't say anything except to ask you who you thought did pour the water in there."

"How should I know?"

"You ought to know better than any fellow in the school."

"You keep saying that I did it," whined Ayers, his voice betraying his alarm.

"All right," said Jack. "I say you did do it. Now, what have you got to say about it?"

"You haven't any right to say so. You can't prove it."

"Perhaps we can't 'prove' it," joined in Dick, "but we *know* some things we can't *prove*. Now do you know what we're going to do?"

"You aren't going to do anything!" screamed Ayers. "If you touch me again I shall tell Humphrey."

"You won't tell him right away," said Jack.

"What are you going to do?"

"You'll find out all right and it won't take you very long, either," retorted Jack. "Now then," he added, "take off your coat."

"I'm not going to take my coat off," shouted Ayers.

"Then we shall have to help you, I'm afraid. Get busy, Dick," added Jack.

Despite the struggles of their unwilling visitor, Ayers' coat was speedily removed.

"Now then, I think you're ready to help out," said Jack. "I want you to take the wet bed

clothes off those beds, and, Dick, I wish you would go down to the housekeeper and tell her you want some dry sheets and blankets. We'll let little Willie Ayers fix up the beds the way they ought to be."

"I shan't do it," declared Ayers.

"Oh, yes you will," said Jack soothingly. "You'll be glad to do it."

"No, I shan't do it either!"

Meanwhile Dick had followed the directions of his roommate and in a brief time returned with the dry bed-clothing.

"Now then, you, Willie Ayers, get busy."

"I tell you I shan't do it!"

"All right, then, we'll have to help you. We'll have to take him down to the bath room and stand him under the shower until he has changed his mind. If you make any trouble it will be the worse for you," Jack added, turning again upon Ayers.

In spite of Ayers' struggles as the boys forced him through the corridor, he did not now make any outcry. In a brief time his two captors, in whose hands he was powerless, had forced him to enter the bath room. As soon as the door had been closed and bolted, they stood him under the shower and at Jack's direction Dick turned on the water.

The determination of Ayers was speedily changed. The water was cold and it was impossible for him to escape from the hands of his captors. The fact that both Jack and Dick also suffered from the downpour of water apparently had slight effect on either. Resolutely they held the boy under the shower until Ayers shouted, "I'll fix the beds."

"I thought you would," said Jack dryly. "Now then, I'm going with you up to your room while you put on some dry clothes and Dick you look out and see that Humphrey or Pussyfoot doesn't show up."

"You'll be sorry for this," wailed Ayers. "When I tell Humphrey about it you'll wish you hadn't laid your hands on me!"

"That's all right, Willie," said Jack, patting his captive on the shoulder. "What's going to happen to us later no man can tell. The only thing I am sure of is that if you set Humphrey on us it will be a sorry day in your life."

"What will you do?"

"We shan't do anything if you don't say anything. But if you go running around the school telling what's happened to you you'll be the butt of all the fellows and if Humphrey tries to take your part he will get a dose of his own medicine."

"Who will give it to him?"

"Perhaps you have forgotten that we have got two brothers in the school who can take Humphrey and make his teeth chatter."

"I'm going to tell Humphrey just the same," declared Ayers.

By this time he had changed his clothing and sullenly accompanied the boys to their room where under their directions he speedily removed the wet sheets and blankets and substituted the dry bedding.

CHAPTER VI

THE DEFENDER OF AYERS

"THERE, that looks better," said Jack as he glanced approvingly at the bed. "The next time you feel like trying it, Ayers, just remember what a good time you have had making our beds. Now then, I want you to come along with us."

"Where?" demanded Ayers, startled by the new demand.

"We're going down on the athletic field and I don't dare leave you here."

"Honestly, I promise I won't pour any more water in your beds."

"You don't need to make any promises, Willie, we know you're not going to do that; but you're coming along with us just the same."

In spite of the protests and attempts of Ayers to hold back he was compelled to accompany his two classmates. When they arrived at the field two elevens already had been formed and the game was starting, and consequently there was no op-

portunity for either Jack or Dick for a time at least to take their places in the line.

With other boys they were standing on the side-lines and it was not long before their attention was diverted from the game to the pranks which the younger boys were playing on one another.

After Ayers several times had been pushed over the form of Jack, who had crouched behind him, he turned upon his tormentors and in his shrillest tones shouted, "I guess you boys will find out that I don't like you very much."

A shout of laughter greeted his implied threat. This, however, only served to increase the rage of the troubled boy and almost beside himself he flew at Charlie Long intent upon doing him harm.

He was prevented from carrying out his purpose by Jack and Dick, who quickly seized the frantic boy and threw him back upon the grass.

"I'll tell Humphrey on you!" shouted Ayers.

"All right then," said Long. "We might as well get out of you all we can now. Come on fellows, form a ring."

A circle was quickly formed with Ayers and Long in the center and the latter at once assumed the rôle of ringmaster.

"Now then," he said to the assembly, "I'm going to have my trained pet do some tricks. Show

them," he said, turning to Ayers, "how the pussy-cat goes when it gets into a bed of catnip."

"I shan't! I shan't!" screamed Ayers.

"Oh, yes, you will. Yes, you will," said Long soothingly. "Come on, or I'll have to help you. The pussy is so delighted with the catnip that she lies down and rolls over," he added. "Here's the catnip," he said as he pointed to a certain place on the grass, "and you get down there and roll over."

When the boy hesitated, Long at once seized him and assisted by two or three of his friends they rolled the protesting boy in the "catnip."

"Very good," said Long at last when he permitted his prisoner to arise. "You did quite well, and I'm sure the audience is amused and appreciative. Would you like to have my pet do some more tricks?"

A shout of approval greeted the query and Long turned quickly to Ayers and said, "Now then, stand up and show how you rub the smile off your face. Sometimes, my friends," he added, turning to the spectators, "there's a smile on a face that will not come off, but I want my little pet to show you how he takes the smile off his face."

Before the directions could be followed, however, the assembly was suddenly broken up by Humphrey who came plunging into the midst of the circle.

"What's going on here?" he demanded, as he faced the startled boys.

"We're just letting your chum do some of his stunts," explained Dick.

"What is it?" said Humphrey, turning to Ayers, who was standing apart from the others whimpering and rubbing his eyes.

"They have been abusing me. I told them I would tell you, but they wouldn't stop."

"Well, I'll make them stop just the same," declared Humphrey as rushing upon the line of young boys, he struck one and kicked another and in a brief time the entire crowd had disappeared.

"What's the trouble, Humphrey?"

The bully turned sharply at the question and saw Stone and Redhead standing behind him.

"Your saintly little brothers," he explained, "have been picking on my roommate. I have sent the whole crowd flying."

"You won't stand for that, will you?" replied Stone.

"Not if I can help it," growled Humphrey.

"I have heard," laughed Redhead, "that you do a little of that yourself over in Hull House."

"Who said I did?" demanded Humphrey, turning sharply at the inquiry.

"I don't know who did say so."

"Did that little sneak brother of yours say that?"

"Let me tell you, Humphrey," said Price quietly, "that my little brother is not a 'sneak,' and it doesn't make any difference whether he told me or not. I guess the whole school knows what a bully you are and how you are picking all the time on the boys younger than you are."

"If that little sneak," repeated Humphrey, "has been telling tales to you let me tell you right now that he will find he's in trouble."

"Thank you," laughed Price. "And do you think he will be the only one in trouble?"

"Why, who else would be?" demanded Humphrey.

"I'll leave that for you to find out, but if I hear of your picking on those little fellows it will be a sorry day for you."

"I'm not the one that said so," said Humphrey after a brief silence.

"Who does say so?" demanded Price.

There was an expression in the eyes of the red-headed boy that clearly indicated that his temper had been aroused by the words of Humphrey. However, as yet he had not changed the tone of his voice and only those who knew him as well as did his roommate, Stone, were aware of the rising anger in his heart.

"If that little sneak," repeated Humphrey, "has been telling tales to you he will find he's in trouble."

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"You had better go over and ask Gumshoe about it," suggested Humphrey. "He says that the two little imps are the worst boys that have entered Tait in five years."

"Let me see, how long have you been in the Tait School?" inquired Stone dryly.

"This is my third year," answered Humphrey.

"And Gumshoe says that Dick and Jack are worse,—are the worst that have entered in five years?"

"That's what he said the other night at the end of study hour. He gave them the limits or rather he got Dr. Hull to do it."

"Is that so?" demanded Stone. "We hadn't seen the little fellows very much of late and I didn't know just what the trouble was. So they have the limits, have they?"

"Yes, they have," growled Humphrey, "and Gumshoe says it's the worst start he has ever known. He thinks they will be on the limits most of the time if they don't get sent home."

"Why were they put on the limits?" inquired Redhead.

"Because Gumshoe wanted them."

"Yes, I understand, but why did he want them?"

"Because they had been disorderly."

"What were they doing?"

"Oh, I don't know all they have been doing," said Humphrey testily.

"You know what they were doing in your room, don't you?" laughed Price.

Humphrey's face flushed and he did not reply to the question as he abruptly turned away and started for the gymnasium.

The two older boys stood watching the bully until Stone said quickly, "I'm sorry Humphrey thinks the little fellows came to us with their tale of woe. He may make life a burden for them."

"Oh, I guess not," laughed Price. "Down deep in his heart he doesn't want trouble. He has a feeling of respect for you that will help him to keep straight."

"It never will do for us to interfere in the affairs at Hull House," said Stone. "It will only make it harder for the boys and yet somehow we have got to keep Humphrey from tormenting the little fellows. I think I'll have Dick and Jack come over to our room to-night."

"But they cannot come," laughed Price. "They are on the limits, you know."

"That's so, I had forgotten that. Then we'll have to go over there and see them. We'll wait until after dinner and then we'll look them up."

"Did you notice," inquired Redhead as the two

boys started toward the house, "the game which Humphrey put up this afternoon?"

"I certainly did. He made the prettiest run I have seen this fall."

"That's right. If he keeps up he'll make the team before the season is ended. I don't know when I have seen right end played better than he played it this afternoon."

"If he would only stop playing the bully he would be a pretty decent sort of chap, but it seems to be born in him to torment the little fellows."

"I don't see how we're going to stop him."

"I do."

"How?"

"I can't tell you that just now, but I shan't let a great strapping boy like him abuse my younger brother."

"I don't think you need to worry much about your younger brother," laughed Redhead. "In my opinion he's perfectly able to take care of himself. The only thing I'm afraid of is that Ayers, who rooms with Humphrey and is a whining little cheat, may get them into trouble somehow. If Humphrey was left alone he wouldn't be half as bad as he is. I understand that Ayers runs to him with his tales of woe and Humphrey feels that he has got to protect his roommate."

"I guess that isn't all there is to it."

"Why not? What else is there?"

"Why, I understand that Humphrey makes a tool of Ayers. He does most of his crooked work for him. Ayers helps him work out his lessons and Humphrey pays him back by protecting him from the attacks of the other boys."

"Well, we'll go over to-night and find out how things are. Just now I'm anxious for a shower and then I shall be ready for dinner."

"So shall I," joined in Jack. "I don't know how much football I'm getting, but I sure am getting an appetite."

CHAPTER VII

AN ESCAPADE

TO the surprise of Jack and Dick, young Ayers, instead of being angry, to all appearances displayed an increasing friendship for the two boys who had treated him so roughly. Each day he sought out their companionship on the way from the classroom to the Hull House. Frequently he was a visitor in their room. Then, too, he displayed a more generous spirit in offering to share some of his choicest possessions with the two boys who naturally had expected him to be their enemy.

Later when Dick related the circumstances to his older brother, that redheaded individual had explained to him that the surest way to make a friend was to show the boy that not only were you not afraid of him, but that you were ready to stand on your rights.

Whatever the explanation may have been the fact remained that to all appearances Ayers was eager to secure the good will of both Dick and Jack.

Humphrey too had ignored the younger boys and his bullying acts for a time, at least, as far as they were concerned, had ceased.

Several days after the events recorded in the preceding chapter had occurred Ayers entered the room of Dick and Jack. The moment he came Dick, who was alone at the time, said, "What's the matter, little Willie? You look as if you had something on your mind."

"I have," answered Ayers glibly. "You guessed right the first time."

"What is it?"

"I have got some money from home."

"No wonder you're happy. Mine is all gone. I get my allowance the first of every week and by Wednesday I'm borrowing from Jack, so that when my money comes the next week it all has to go to pay my debts. But I thought you weren't allowed to have money from home. I thought the rule is that all money is to be sent to the head of the house and given out by him on a regular allowance every week."

"That's the 'rule' all right," laughed Ayers, glancing stealthily toward the door as he spoke to make sure that his words had not been overheard. "We don't always have to follow the rules."

Dick did not respond to the implied suggestion and simply said, "How much did you get?"

"Five dollars."

"Whew!" whistled the younger boy. "That's a lot of money. What are you going to do with it?"

"I'm going to have a spread."

"Where?"

"In my room."

"When?"

"To-night."

"To-night?" exclaimed Dick. "You can't do it."

"Why can't I do it?"

"There will be no chance."

"Yes, there will be a chance, too," retorted Ayers. "We can wait till after the lights are out and Gumshoe has gone the rounds and then there won't be anybody to bother us. I don't know though," Ayers added thoughtfully, "but it will be better to have the spread to-morrow night. And then to-night after the lights are out we can start down town and buy the stuff. Gee, what a spread we can have for five dollars! I'll have you there, and Jack, and Humphrey and Charlie Long, and one or two more. It wouldn't do to have too many because we'll want to have enough for every one."

Dick was becoming interested in the project and the excitement of his visitor was contagious.

He had not spoken, however, and Ayers speedily resumed his explanations. "Yes, we can wait until after the lights are out and then you and I can go down town to-night and buy up the stuff. We'll have some buns and cream puffs and chocolate eclairs and everything else we can find that's good."

Dick's scruples by this time were melting under the warmth of his visitor's interest. "Suppose we get caught?" he suggested.

"But we shan't get caught," Ayers said. "Gumshoe won't go the rounds again unless there's a disturbance of some kind and we'll turn his own tricks back on him. We'll go down the stairs in our stocking feet and he won't hear anything."

"But the hall door is locked," suggested Dick.

"That's all right, I know how to open it," and as he spoke Ayers thrust his hand into his pocket and drew forth a skeleton key which he explained fitted all the locks on the first floor. "Will you go with me to-night?" he demanded.

"I guess so," answered Dick.

"But I want to know," grinned Ayers. "Why don't you say yes or no?"

"How long do you expect to be gone?"

"Only just long enough to get the stuff for the spread. We'll be back here in half an hour."

"All right, I'll go."

The excitement of the project as well as the prospect of the spread described by Ayers, had appealed too strongly for the scruples of the impulsive boy. Already he had heard tales of boys who had successfully crept out of the house at night and of the good times they had had on their stealthy visits to other parts of the school or to the village which was only a short distance away.

"Good for you," said Ayers. "And by the way," he added, "did you know that Humphrey had made the eleven?"

"What do you mean?" demanded Dick. "The first eleven?"

"Sure! What else could I mean? He is to play right end in the game with the Military Academy."

"When is that?"

"Two weeks from Saturday."

"Where do they play?"

"Here on our grounds."

"I guess Humphrey will be so busy that he won't have any time to bother with us," laughed Dick.

"Oh, he wouldn't bother you any more anyway," said Ayers. "He just wanted to find out what kind of stuff you were made of."

"Well, is he satisfied?" inquired Dick.

"Yes, he says you're all right. And I say so too, though I didn't like it very well when you made me stand under the shower bath."

At the recollection there was a gleam of vindictiveness in the eyes of the boy, which, however, was unnoticed by Dick.

"Did you say," inquired Dick, "that Humphrey is going to be at your spread to-morrow night?"

"Yes."

"Well, how can he do that if he is going to play on the team? The trainer wouldn't let him do it if he knew."

"He'll never know, so he won't be any wiser."

True to his promise, that night as soon as the lights were out and the teachers had made the rounds of the rooms to see that the boys were in bed, Dick slipped out of his room and carrying his shoes in his hand stole softly down the stairway to the corridor below. He had not explained to his roommate the project in which he had promised to share. Somehow the lad felt that the straightforward Jack, full of life and mischief though he might be, would not approve of the direct violation of the rules, and even Dick somehow felt that there was less pleasure in the adventure than he had expected when at last he saw Ayers waiting for him in the circular stairway at the end of the hall.

There was sufficient light that came in through

the windows to show Dick that Ayers was there and then at a whispered word from the latter the two boys slowly and cautiously descended the winding stairway. Then they paused to ascertain whether or not their departure had been discovered.

The silence of the big house, however, was unbroken. A moment later Ayers drew forth his skeleton key and stealthily unlocked the outer door.

Together the two boys noiselessly stole from the building and soon were on the street which led to the village below.

Dick's heart was beating rapidly in his excitement. As the boys continued on their way they met two men and for a moment Dick was convinced that they had been discovered. However, the men passed them without stopping and the two boys began to run.

"We'll have to hurry," Ayers explained, "or all the places in the village will be shut up. There won't be any chance to buy anything to-morrow so whatever we get we must get to-night."

In a brief time they arrived at the ice cream parlors of "Ma" Jenkins. The proprietor was a short, stout, good-natured woman who had long been famous for the quality of her wares. A friend of all the boys, she received their confidences without betraying them and even when

they were on mischief bent she was discreetly silent when the school authorities sought her for information.

"I haven't got very much left," she exclaimed in response to the inquiries of Ayers. "We had an unusually big run to-night. I'll see what I can do for you though."

The result of her quest was disclosed when she placed the three small paper bags filled with goods upon the counter. "I'm sorry I can't do more for you," she explained. "I may have something to-morrow and if I do shall I keep some of it for you?"

"I'll tell you about that to-morrow," said Ayers, who at once took two of the bags in his hands and bidding Dick take the third promptly led the way from the village.

The boys were not molested on their way back to the school and as they arrived on the grounds, Ayers said, "This stuff makes me hungry. Let's stop here and sample it before we go back to our rooms."

Dick was somewhat dubious as to the quantity of goods they had obtained being sufficient for the number of boys whom Ayers had said he intended to invite to his spread. However, he too was tempted by the odor and willingly joined his com-

panion who already was seated on the grass and had opened one of the bags.

When they arose they had only two bags to carry back into the building. Ayers retained both of these in his grasp.

Frequently the two boys halted to assure themselves that their presence was not known. They were not molested when they arrived at the entrance of the dormitory.

"Wait a minute," whispered Ayers, as he paused before he attempted to unlock the door. "I thought I heard somebody around the corner. Run around there, Dick, and see if anyone is there."

Obediently Dick did as he was bidden. In a brief time he returned, prepared to report to his companion that he had not discovered anyone.

To his surprise, however, Ayers had disappeared, and when Dick tried to open the door he was startled when he found that it was fastened.

CHAPTER VIII

DETECTED

FOR a moment Dick was so startled by the unexpected occurrence that he was unable to believe that Ayers really had left him outside. That his companion had deliberately turned the key in the lock and prevented him from reëntering the building, at the moment had not even occurred to the mind of the impulsive boy. Surely there was some mistake and in his excitement Dick in a low voice called to his recent companion.

"Hi! Willie! The door is fast, Ayers! Open up! Open up!"

No answer to his frantic appeal was made and when the attempt had been repeated several times without success, Dick, almost in tears by this time, ran hastily around to the wing of the dormitory and stood directly beneath the window in the opposite end of the corridor.

It was possible here for him to climb part way up the wall and stand on the casing of the doors which opened into the cellar below. The window

however, was shut fast and in spite of his desperate attempts Dick was unable to move it.

Again he turned to the door at the foot of the circular stairway but his attempts to open it were still unsuccessful. He listened a moment thinking that he heard the voice of Ayers inside the door, but in a few minutes he was convinced of his mistake.

At last the troubled lad ran swiftly to a position directly beneath the room which he and Jack occupied.

A drop of rain fell upon his up-turned face when he glanced toward the window. The drop was speedily followed by others and yet Dick was almost unaware of the downpour.

"Hi, there!" he called. "Jack! Jack! Wake up! Let me in."

The rain steadily continued but no response was made to his frantic appeal. "Jack! Jack!" he called in tones still louder. He was fearful of awakening one of the teachers who roomed on the same corridor in which his own room was located.

He was in desperate plight, however, and raising his voice, in still louder tones he called, "Jack! Jack! Open up! I'm caught out here in the rain."

Still his appeal was unheard. Stooping to the ground Dick seized a handful of gravel and tossed

it against the window of his room. He heard two or three of the pebbles rattle against the glass, but still his sleeping roommate did not appear at the window.

Twice Dick in his desperation repeated his effort and was delighted when after his third shower of gravel had been thrown against the panes he saw the face of Jack directly above him.

"What's wrong? What's wrong?" called Jack.

"I'm locked out," answered Dick.

"What's the matter? What have you been doing?"

"Don't stop to talk," said Dick irritably. "Come down and let me in."

"All right. I'll come down to the circular stairway."

"I'll be there," answered Dick, greatly relieved by the success of his effort to arouse his roommate.

The rain now was not only coming down steadily, but in increasing volume. Already the perplexed boy was drenched with the downpour but he was almost unmindful of his predicament. His one thought now was to obtain an entrance into the building. Whenever he thought of Ayers his fists almost instinctively closed. Convinced now that his recent companion had purposely left him outside the building there were dire thoughts in

Dick's mind concerning the experiences through which Ayers speedily would be called to pass.

By this time however, he had returned to the door and soon afterward heard the faint sound of his roommate descending the stairway.

In his eagerness Dick turned the knob several times. It still was impossible for him to open the door.

He heard the attempts of Jack from within but apparently no better success crowned his efforts.

"Isn't there any key in there?" called Dick.

"No," answered Jack.

"Is the door bolted or locked?"

"Both," answered Jack.

Dick heard the bolt sliding back into its place, but as there was no key it still was impossible for his friend to open the door.

"I can't do it," called Jack in despair. "I'll have to open the window for you. Are you wet?"

"Soaked," answered Dick. "Open the window then and be quick about it."

It was impossible, however, for Jack to raise the window on the ground floor. It had been secured in such a manner that it was fast and all the efforts of the boy to raise it resulted in failure.

A few steps farther up the stairway, however, was another window. This was at least six feet above the ground.

Hastily mounting the steps Jack succeeded in unlocking this window and quickly raised it.

"Come around here, Dick," he called as he thrust his head for a moment outside.

Instantly Dick responded to his call and stood directly beneath the place where Jack was peering down upon him.

It was a ridiculous sight and at other times Jack would have laughed heartily at the predicament of his roommate. In the dim light he was able to see the forlorn appearance of Dick, but the eagerness of his roommate to be admitted within the building was so keen that Jack did not have the heart to delay or to refer to the woe-be-gone appearance of his friend.

"How shall I get in?" whispered Dick. "I can't reach the sill."

"I'll stretch my hands down," answered Jack. "You take hold of my hands and I'll pull you up until you get hold."

Thrusting his head and shoulders through the open window Jack leaned down to help his friend.

Dick, however, was so excited that he leaped for his roommate's arms before the latter had braced himself to receive him. The result of his unexpected action was that Jack suddenly was drawn through the open space and fell on the muddy ground beneath.

Angered as well as startled by the unexpected outcome of his attempt to help Dick, Jack leaped to his feet and turned quickly upon his friend. "What did you do that for?" he demanded. "Why didn't you wait until I had braced myself. You hauled me right out and I don't know how either one of us will get in now."

"Oh, I know. That's all right," said Dick, striving to repress his laughter.

The ridiculous sight presented by Jack had caused him for a moment to forget even his own troubles. He was quickly recalled, however, by Jack's word and said, "Here, Jack, I'll lean over against the building. You climb up on my shoulders and I guess you can reach the window-sill all right. You can climb back in and then you can reach out your hand for me and I'll be with you in a jiffy."

Jack, who was clad in his pajamas and was barefooted and hatless nimbly clambered up on the back of his roommate as soon as Dick had braced himself against the wall. He was compelled however, to repeat his attempt three times before he secured a footing strong enough to enable him to grasp the sill above him.

At last, however, success crowned his efforts and lightly Jack pulled himself up and clambered into the hall.

This time when he extended his arms he was prepared for the grasp of his friend. Slowly and steadily he assisted Dick to mount the wall and as soon as his head was level with the window-sill the boy succeeded in passing through the open window and speedily was standing beside his classmate.

"There," whispered Dick. "I'm glad to be in out of the wet."

"What were you doing out here?" whispered Jack.

"Wait until we get back to our room and I'll tell you all about it. Come on, let's shut this window and get upstairs."

"Better take off your shoes," suggested Jack.

"That's right," said Dick, and seating himself on the stairway he removed his shoes while his companion again closed and fastened the window.

"You're all right now," whispered Dick assuringly, for he was aware that Jack had not as yet entirely recovered from his sudden fall to the ground.

"What were you out there for?" demanded Jack again in a whisper.

"I'll tell you all about it when we get back to the room. I can't talk here. Come on and don't make any noise."

With Dick leading the way, the two boys pro-

ceeded cautiously up the stairway that led to the corridor on which their room was located. They heard no sound to alarm them and had arrived at the top of the stairway when suddenly a light was flashed in their faces and they saw Mr. McCann standing directly before them.

In his hands was a dark lantern and on his feet were rubbers the use of which for several reasons had won for him from the boys the name of Gumshoe.

"Ah, ha!" said Mr. McCann, chuckling as he spoke. "I have caught you red handed. You'll both come to my room."

"But I have on my pajamas," protested Jack.

"You should have thought of that before," replied Mr. McCann. "I want you to come just as you are. It will be a fine story you'll have to tell this time. Do you know," he added, "I was aware of what you two boys were planning long before you put your plan into execution?"

"But I didn't have any plan," protested Jack. "I didn't and I don't know anything about it."

"That's right, he didn't," spoke up Dick sturdily.

"That sounds very well," said the teacher. "I shall give you both an opportunity, however, to explain a little more in detail after I have conducted you to my room. I have been waiting a

half-hour for you to appear and I was fearful that you had abandoned your plan."

"Why? Did you want us to get into trouble?" demanded Dick sturdily.

"That is exactly what I do *not* want. I wish that the boys would trust us when we tell them that 'the way of the transgressor is hard.' There is a certain type of vicious boy, however, who seems bent upon ignoring all authority and who is determined to prove to himself the truth of that familiar statement. You'll have many days in which to think the matter over now, for I'm inclined to think that Mr. Hull will decide that the Tait School will be a safer and a better place for boys if your parents remove you from our midst."

CHAPTER IX

THE INTERVIEW

"BUT I'm telling you, Mr. Gumshoe," began Dick excitedly.

"What!" interrupted the teacher sharply.

"I didn't mean that. I—I didn't mean to say that at all," declared Dick greatly excited by the slip he had made. "I didn't mean to say that at all, Mr. Pussyfoot."

Dick was aware as soon as he had spoken that he had made another serious blunder. He was so excited, however, that the names by which Mr. McCann was commonly known had been spoken before he was fully aware of the words he had used.

"You are insulting!" shouted Mr. McCann. "I shall report that also. I am sure that your days in the Tait School are numbered. I will not have a boy under me who has no respect for his teachers."

Dick thoroughly angry now as well as alarmed almost lost control of himself in his excitement.

"I can tell you Mr. Puss—McCann, I mean, that I don't like to be under you, either. I guess the boys would respect you more if you were worth respecting."

"You are heaping insult upon insult. Piling Pelion on Ossa so to speak."

"I'm not doing anything of the kind!" declared Dick. "I would like to explain the whole thing to you, but you will not give me a chance."

"There's nothing to explain. Both you boys will at once go to your room and you'll not leave the building before you have consulted with Dr. Hull."

"But Mr. McCann,—" began Jack.

"Silence!" said the teacher sternly. "I will not listen to any further insults. You will at once go to your room."

Chagrined as well as troubled, the two boys departed from the teacher's room and slowly made their way along the corridor. They both were confident that when they were passing the door of the room occupied by Humphrey and Ayers that there was a silent closing of the door and a low laugh heard. They could not be certain, however, because the corridor was dark and they were both eager to return to their own room.

"What's it all about, Dick?" inquired Jack in a low voice after both boys were in bed.

"I don't know. I can't tell what I've done. It seems like a dream."

"Maybe you walked in your sleep," suggested Jack not unkindly.

"No, I didn't. Ayers came to me and said he was going to have a little spread in his room after lights were out. He wanted me to go down town with him and buy the stuff to-night so it would be on hand for to-morrow night. I know I ought not to have gone, but he said we wouldn't be out more than fifteen or twenty minutes, and I thought that wouldn't do any harm and it would be a good lark to have a spread in his room."

"How did you get out?"

"Ayers had a key."

"Why didn't he let you in?"

"That's what I don't know," said Dick ruefully. "He let himself in and then when I tried to open the door I found it locked. I called to him, but he didn't answer."

"Did he have the stuff you bought?"

"Yes, he did and he kept it too. We ate one bag full of stuff, but he had the other two."

"Dick," suggested Jack after a brief silence, "do you know I believe that Ayers put up that job on you?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why I think he got you to go with him down

to the store,—and by the way did you pay for the stuff or did he?''

''He did.''

''That's all right,'' chuckled Jack.

''I didn't know but he got you into trouble and then made you pay for the stuff besides.''

''Do you suppose he told Gumshoe?''

''I don't know—yet. We'll talk it over with the older fellows and find out more.''

Directly after breakfast the following morning before Dick and Jack left their places at their table in the dining-room, Mr. McCann approached the place where they were seated and in a low voice said, ''You are to report at once in the Doctor's office. Go just as soon as you have finished your breakfast.''

The boys glanced anxiously at each other, although Dick was unable to understand the fear in the heart of his friend. It was so clear to him that he himself was the only guilty party that it was impossible for him even to think of his roommate as being looked upon by the shrewd housemaster as in anyway guilty.

As soon as their breakfast was ended both boys at once went to the office of Dr. Hull. The teacher was waiting for them. As they entered he swung around in his chair from the desk before which he was seated and glancing over his spectacles,

shrewdly looked at each of his unwilling visitors.

Dr. Hull was an elderly man. His hair now white stood straight up on his head and a first glance helped to produce an impression of sternness which was really not to be found in his makeup. Firm he could be and sharp in his statements, but beneath it all his heart was tender and kind. Even when he was compelled by duty to punish his boys he did so in a manner that made the culprits feel that they were causing him pain as well as that they themselves were suffering the results of their own action.

"Good morning, boys," said the Doctor kindly. "Please be seated. Mr. McCann reports that you were both out of the building after hours last night. Is that true?"

"Yes, sir," said Dick promptly. "Only Jack didn't do it."

"What do you mean?"

"Why I mean that I was out and I waked up Jack after I had called to him two or three times and thrown some pebbles against the window to come down and let me in."

"I'll hear some more about that later. Tell me your story now, Price."

Thus bidden Dick frankly related all that occurred in his adventure the preceding evening, omitting, however, the name of Ayers.

Dr. Hull listened attentively until the story had all been told and then said to Jack, "And you too ought to be punished, I fancy, because you aided and abetted a malefactor."

"I don't know what that means," said Jack, "but I'm willing to take my dose along with Dick."

Ignoring the suggestion Dr. Hull said, "But there is one part of the tale which you have omitted, I am afraid."

"What is that, Doctor?" inquired Dick quickly. "I thought I told you everything."

"Mr. McCann reports to me that you were most insulting. That you repeatedly called him names and taunted him."

"No, sir, I did not. I didn't do it," spoke up Dick eagerly.

"Did you address him as Mr. McCann in your interview with him?"

Dick's face flushed as he said, "Before I knew it 'Gumshoe' slipped out of my mouth. I didn't mean to insult him, but all the boys call him Gumshoe and Pussyfoot, and I used those names before I thought."

"Which is really no excuse."

"But you aren't going to send me home, are you Doctor?" protested Dick eagerly. "Mr. Gum— Mr. McCann, I mean, said you would send me

home. He said I was spoiling the other boys."

The Doctor's eyes twinkled a moment, although the stern expression of his face was still manifest when he said, "I'm inclined to think we shall give you another chance, Price. Your brother was a troublesome boy when he first entered, but I believe his heart was true, and I think yours is also."

"Thank you, Doctor," said Dick in a low voice, his eyes filling as he spoke in spite of his endeavors to control himself.

"You will understand, boys," continued the Doctor, "that the discipline of the school must be upheld. I'm not trying to apologize for either of you or explain away what you have done. You knew what the rules of the school are and there is no excuse for your breaking them. Let me tell you how I look at this whole scheme of school work. I wonder if either of you has ever thought of the reason why your fathers sent you here. It costs them a good deal of money. Why do you suppose they are paying it?"

"They want us to get an education," spoke up Jack promptly.

"And what do you think an education is?"

"Why I don't know," said Jack in some confusion. "It's learning all about things."

"What things?" said the Doctor with a smile.

"Oh, the lessons in books."

"And is that all?"

"Why, what else is there?"

"You're also learning things from the other boys, and your roommate seems to have had one lesson last evening which I hope he will remember for some time. I have seen boys come here who try to evade the work. They do not realize that the only ones that lose are they themselves. The teachers will draw their salaries, the Tait School will go on, I trust, when you and I are forgotten, but the boy who doesn't get all he can for the money that is being spent upon him is the loser. If you were to stop on the street and buy a cup of peanuts from an Italian vendor and you did not think you were getting the worth of your money you would insist that he should make the measure good. Now wouldn't you?"

"Yes, sir, we would," said both boys together.

"Well, then why don't you look upon the money your fathers are spending for you in school in the same way? I want you both to get the worth of the money. Then too there's another thing. A great many boys fall into trouble in the early days of their course because they have not learned how to pronounce two of the shortest words in the English language."

Both boys looked at the headmaster questioningly but neither spoke, and in a moment Dr.

Hull resumed his talk. "The two words to which I refer are 'yes' and 'no.' There are people who say yes as if they mean no, and no as if they mean yes. For new boys to learn how to pronounce each word just as it ought to be spoken is to save themselves a vast amount of trouble all through their school life. The vicious boys never molest a fellow who can do that. I'm somewhat afraid that Price's trouble last night arose from the fact that he had not yet learned how to say 'yes' or 'no.'"

"I don't know, Doctor," spoke up Dick. "I said 'yes' right away when—when one of the fellows asked me to go with him. I guess he knew what I meant."

"That is quite likely," said the Doctor with a smile. "I have no desire to increase your troubles, but I am eager for both of you to learn the full meaning of the little sermon I have just been preaching. Now then," he added as he arose from the chair in which he had been sitting, "I shall not send Price home, but I shall punish him for his disobedience. He will be put on the limits, in a measure on probation, until further notice."

"How long,—" began Dick eagerly.

"I have just told you," replied the Doctor quietly. "'Until further notice.' I shall expect also that you will apologize to Mr. McCann for

the use of the names by which you called him. As for Stone, after I have listened to his explanation, which I am sure is true, I shall forgive him, but I shall also expect that he will be extremely careful hereafter in avoiding any break of the rules of the school."

CHAPTER X

THE PENALTY

WHEN Dick and Jack departed from the office of Dr. Hull they met many of the boys preparing to leave for the building in which their daily recitations were held. Some of them greeted Dick and Jack with expressions of sympathy, while others appeared to look upon them as if they were outcasts in the school life. Both boys were eagerly looking about for Ayers, but for some reason he had not yet appeared.

When the two boys ran up to their room to obtain their books they waited a brief time before they left to join their schoolmates.

"There's no reason in the world," said Jack indignantly, "why you should be put on the limits. You wouldn't be either, if it wasn't for Gumshoe."

"Probably not," laughed Dick. "If it hadn't been for him I shouldn't have been found out. If I had got past him I shouldn't have had any trouble at all."

"And now you have got to apologize to him."

"Yes, that's the bitterest dose of all."

"I'll tell you what you do," suggested Jack. "You follow the example of Sheridan."

"Who was he?"

"I don't know. I think he was an Englishman."

"His name doesn't sound that way."

"That may all be, but he was a smart little fellow. He was a lawyer, I think. I remember hearing my big brother telling about him. One time when he was in a courtroom the lawyer for the other side looked down at him and after he had called him a little imp and a few other choice names he said sneeringly, 'I could swallow you.' Then Sheridan said, 'If you did you would have more brains in your stomach than you have in your head.'"

"But I can't tell Gumshoe that," laughed Dick.

"No," acknowledged Jack, "and I remember that my big brother when he was telling about him said too that one time he insulted a judge by calling him an ass. The judge made him apologize so he did it in this way, 'I called your honor an ass, it is true. I am sorry for it.' Why don't you apologize to Gumshoe in some such way?"

"I guess it's because I am not your Mr. Sheridan you're telling about. If I had brains enough

to think up something as smart as that I might try it."

"When are you going to do the job?"

"Oh, I don't know. The sooner it's done the better. Come on, it's time for the Latin class."

Together the two boys departed from Hull House and from their manner an observer would have had difficulty in detecting any depression. Nevertheless in Dick's heart, whenever he thought of the coming football days he was greatly cast down. To be deprived of the privilege of seeing the team in its approaching game with the Military Academy was a severe trial in itself, but to be prevented from beholding his older brother who he had no doubt would be the star of the game, was still more difficult to bear.

The evening of that same day just before study-hour Dick and Jack slowly made their way to the room of Mr. McCann.

The incident which Jack had related to his roommate was still fresh in Dick's mind, but try as he might he had been unable to think of any form equally clever. Finally he decided to speak as demurely as he was able and to use a form not unlike that which the celebrated wit had adopted in his apology to the court.

"We have come to apologize," explained Dick

when the boys had been admitted by the teacher.

"Yes, sir. Yes, sir," said Mr. McCann. "There's great need of it and I am willing to listen to you."

"I called you Gumshoe, it is true. I'm sorry for it."

For a moment the teacher glanced up from the chair in which he was seated by his table and stared blankly at his youthful visitor. For a moment no one spoke.

"What did you say that you were sorry for?" inquired Mr. McCann at last.

"Why," began Dick in some confusion. "I said that I had called you Gumshoe, it's true. I am sorry for it!"

Again the unpopular teacher peered keenly into the face of the boy, but apparently deciding not to obey the impulse of his heart he said quickly. "Very good. Very good, I am glad you are sorry. You certainly ought to be. 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.' Respect for men in authority is also the first step in the pathway of wisdom. I accept your apology. Now how about your roommate?"

"But I didn't say anything," spoke up Jack.

"True. Quite true. I am willing to accept your statement also. Dr. Hull informs me that he has satisfied himself that Stone was not really or at

least not intentionally infringing the rules of the school, when he opened the window and let you in. I am willing to accept that version though I fear the Doctor is greatly mistaken."

"No, Mr. McCann," spoke up Jack quickly. "He is not mistaken. You don't suppose I would climb out of the house and go down town in my pajamas, do you?"

"Most assuredly not," answered Mr. McCann, "but I was not aware that you were clad in your night clothing."

"He was," spoke up Dick quick to defend his friend.

"Very well. Very well," said Mr. McCann, rubbing his hands as he spoke. "We'll consider the matter ended as far as your relations with me are concerned. On the other hand I understand that young Price is on probation and that whether or not he will be permitted to remain in the Tait School depends upon the manner in which he conducts himself during the coming few months."

"Months!" exclaimed Dick aghast. "Am I going to be on the limits for months?"

"You are fortunate," said Mr. McCann, "to be able to remain in the school at all. I bid you good evening."

"It's tough!" exclaimed Jack when the two boys departed from the room. "I'm sorry."

"So am I," said Dick ruefully. "But there's no use in kicking."

"I would kick,—or at least I would kick at that Willie Ayers. Come, let's go up to his room now."

"All right," answered Dick, and instead of withdrawing to their own room the two boys at once went to that occupied by Humphrey and Ayers.

They were bidden to enter in response to their knock, but much of their confidence evaporated when they discovered that Humphrey as well as Ayers was in the room.

"Hello," growled Humphrey. "What do you kids want now?"

"I want to know," began Dick, striving manfully to maintain his courage, "what Ayers meant by playing the trick he did on me last night."

"What trick?" inquired Ayers blandly.

"You know as well as I. There isn't any use in my telling you."

"All I can say is I don't know what you mean."

"Why did you lock me out?"

"Did I lock you out?"

"You most certainly did."

"Why I thought the door was all right. It must have been a snap lock. I was afraid we would be caught so I went right up stairs. I wondered

where you were and why you didn't come up for your share of the spread."

"Yes, you did!" declared Dick sneeringly. "I know all about that. You locked the door and bolted the window."

"I didn't touch the window," declared Ayers. "I did close the door, but I didn't know that I locked it."

For a moment the two boys glared at each other but Dick was still unconvinced by the declaration of his classmate.

"Now look here," spoke up Humphrey. "I don't want you kids to begin picking on Ayers. He's in my charge and I propose to look out for him. If I hear that either one of you has done anything to him I'll—"

"You'll what?" demanded Dick, boldly maintaining his stand.

"I'll make you sorry."

"How will you do it?" spoke up Jack. "Will you go over and talk with our brothers?"

"I shan't need to do that," said Humphrey, quickly leaping from his chair. "Get out of this room! Get out now! Don't wait a minute or I shall kick you down the stairway!"

After that cordial invitation to withdraw, as Jack demurely termed the recent command of Humphrey, the boys returned to their own room

where they found two others of their classmates awaiting their coming.

"Did you get the limits?" inquired Charlie Long when Dick and Jack entered.

"Dick did, I didn't," explained Jack.

"How was that?"

"Why I don't know. I guess I didn't go down town."

"And I'll tell you right now," said Dick warmly, "that I'm not going again."

"Oh, yes you will," laughed Charlie. "I guess you'll take your turn with the other fellows."

"Not if I know what I'm doing," asserted Dick. "Ayers got me into this thing and then got himself out."

"The litle sneak, that's just like him!" exclaimed Charlie angrily. "He does all kinds of pranks and then if one of the fellows tries to pay him back he runs and tells his tale of woe and Humphrey thumps the fellow that did it until he can't walk straight."

"He hasn't touched us for a week," asserted Dick.

"That's right, but he has been so anxious to get a place on the team that he hasn't had any time to devote to us."

The reference to the school eleven caused a great

sinking of the heart for poor Dick. He was deeply interested and eager to watch the first thrilling game of football it was to have been his privilege to see.

As the slow days dragged on there were times when Dick felt almost as if his punishment was more than he could bear. No complaint had been made by Mr. McCann that his apology was lacking, but Dick nevertheless was aware that the eyes of the teacher were upon him most of the time.

Dick insisted that his roommate who offered to share his limits should not deprive himself of the joy of watching the game. When the following Saturday arrived and the team of the Military Academy was brought to town in a huge barge, the excitement of the Tait School almost seemed to be running over.

No one was more excited than poor Dick who was denied the privilege of witnessing the game. Disconsolately he seated himself in his room, doing his utmost to read an exciting story which Charlie Long had loaned him.

Through the open window, however, the shouts and cheers of the assembly came at frequent intervals and Dick was unable even a brief time to follow the fortunes of the hero of the tale. As the moments passed, his feeling of depression in-

creased until at last it seemed to the distracted boy that he must leave Hull House and at his swiftest paces run to the athletic field where one of the supreme events of the year was being enacted.

CHAPTER XI

AFTER THE GAME

THE sounds of the cheering from the athletic field steadily became more frequent and prolonged. It was plain to Dick that the excitement among the spectators was increasingly keen. There were sudden outbursts of the shouting of the great assembly, sounding like the hoarse cry of some huge individual. Again he heard the prolonged and regular cheers which he knew were given under the direction of selected leaders. In his mind he could see these leaders now passing back and forth before the stands and keeping time with their arms and feet to the music of the song.

As the moments slowly dragged on, the feeling of depression in Dick's heart increased. Indeed, there was a time when he threw his arms on the table and bowed his head on them, and as he was alone in his room he felt free to give way to his feelings.

However, his courage soon returned and aware that the limits provided a condition from which

there was no escape he resolutely did his utmost to be brave.

He was allowed, however, the use of the immediate grounds of the Hull House and at last he left his room and walked out to the fence where the sounds from the distant athletic field were more distinctly heard.

At last Dick was convinced that the time when the game must end was drawing nigh. Not only was he aware of this fact from the passing of the time, but also the sounds of increasing excitement bore witness to the same truth.

It was plain also to the boy that the game was exciting and close, otherwise the noise from the field would not have been so great.

No one was passing on the street and consequently it was impossible for Dick to ascertain what the prospects of the Tait School eleven were. Perhaps neither side had scored, he thought. The steady sound of the cheering and of the songs was unbroken now by any bursts indicative of sudden excitement.

Almost in despair, Dick at last turned to his room and again tried to interest himself in the story which Charlie Long had brought him. In a measure he succeeded, though continually he found himself listening to the sounds that came in through his open window.

At last there was a final outburst and then silence followed. The shouting ceased almost abruptly. Dick was sure now that the game was ended. He pictured to himself the departing crowd and wondered how his brother and Stone had acquitted themselves in the contest.

Somehow he was hopeful that his brother would come into Hull House and relate to him the story of the game. He was aware, however, that Redhead would first have to go to the gymnasium to bathe and dress after the game, and that considerable time must elapse before he could hear the story he was so eager to have told him.

Abruptly he arose when he heard the sound of some one running swiftly up the stairway. In a moment his own door was opened and his roommate rushed into his presence.

"Who won? Who won?" demanded Dick excitedly.

"Nobody!"

"How's that?"

"It was a tie. Each team scored one goal."

"Did each kick a goal?"

"Yes, and it made the score even."

"Why didn't they keep on playing until one or the other was ahead?"

"Because that isn't in the game," declared Jack wisely.

"What will be done now?"

"I don't know that anything will. Some one said they might play off the tie if the other schools in the league made it necessary."

"What do you mean? The other schools might want Tait and the Military Academy to play off the tie?"

"I don't think so," answered Jack, "but each team may win or lose the same number of games. In that case you see there wouldn't be any championship won, so Tait and the Military Academy would have to play off the tie to see who leads."

"Tell me about the game," said Dick eagerly. "How did my brother do?"

"He did well and so did mine. But you can't guess who the star of the game was."

"No, who was it?"

"Humphrey."

"Honest?"

"Yes, sir. He surprised us all."

"What did he do? Make a star play or put up a steady game?"

"Both. He was down under the ball so that four or five times the Military fellows were downed right in their tracks. But his great trick was catching a forward pass and dodging the whole Military Academy line."

"That must have been great."

"It certainly was," said Jack enthusiastically. "It's a pity you weren't there. Both teams had tried forward passes a number of times, but hadn't made them work very well. But this time Redhead got the ball just right and he fooled the eleven completely. He pretended he was going to pass the ball behind the line and drew in all the Academy fellows. They made a rush almost together and then Redhead turned and threw the ball with all his strength. Humphrey caught it squarely in his arms and he had a lead of at least a yard over all the other fellows when he started toward their goal. My, the way he did run was a caution! The crowd stood up and yelled and yelled and kept on yelling and when he finally scooted across the goal line I thought everybody would go mad. You see the Academy fellows made their goal in the first quarter and Humphrey didn't make his run until the last, so all through the game we had the load of that lead which the Military Academy team had right on the start."

"Was it a good game?"

"You're right, it was. Long says the fellows never put up such a game so early in the year. Every fellow seemed to block his man and be right on the job every minute."

"Which team was heavier?"

"The average was less than one pound and a half difference. They had one big fellow who must weigh two hundred and sixty-five pounds. Then they had a little fellow for quarter-back who didn't weigh more than one hundred and ten. You wouldn't have thought to see the litle chap that he would amount to much in the scrimmage, but he was just like a rubber ball. They couldn't dent him. He would crawl out from under a pile of fellows and the first thing you knew he would be scooting down the field. He was the fellow that made their touchdown. We didn't have any such big differences in weight on our team but the average, as I told you was nearly the same."

"What did your brother do, Jack?"

"He got kicked in the nose for one thing. That took him out for pretty nearly the full time, but he was plucky and went back."

"Was there any crooked work?"

"Only once. I thought the crowd would rush out on the field and mob one fellow. He was a long, lanky chap. The play came in about the middle of the game. The ball had been passed to Redhead and a big hole had been opened up in the line so that he got through all right. He had almost a clear field before him. This fellow

I'm telling you about was full back on the Academy eleven. He came diagonally across the field toward Redhead and tackled him good and hard. That was all fair enough but one of their other fellows ran and threw himself on Redhead after he was down. As soon as he came up and played that dirty trick this long, lanky full back just pushed Redhead's head under his back and began to roll back and forth so that he was grinding the poor chap's face right into the dirt. A great yell went up from our side and the fellows all jumped out of their seats and started across the field. But the teachers rushed out between the fellows and so no harm was done, but the referee set the Academy fellows back good and plenty."

"Didn't they try it again?"

"No, they didn't. They had learned their lesson and that was all that was necessary."

"How about the punting?"

"They had a punter that was good but he didn't come up to my brother, if I do say so. He's the best punter the Tait School has ever had. At least that's what Seeley says and he's been the coach here for twelve years."

"How far did he punt?"

"I think his best punt was sixty yards."

"He must have had the wind with him then."

"He did, although it wasn't very strong. It saved our goal once, I'm sure."

The conversation was abruptly ended when the door opened and Humphrey entered. His face was beaming and it was evident at once that he was indulging only kindly feelings.

"You poor, little imp," he said, slapping Dick upon the back. "I came in to tell you about the game."

"That's mighty good of you, Hump," said Dick cordially, relieved by the unexpected change in the manner of the school bully.

"Yes, sir, we had a great game," continued Humphrey. "I made a run of sixty yards that Seeley tells me was a wonder. Did you see it?" he added, turning to Jack as he spoke.

"Yes," replied Jack quietly. "I have been telling Dick about it."

"Have you?" exclaimed Humphrey greatly pleased by the praise of the boys. "I tell you what, I'm going in for football more than I did and when I get in my fine work the school will have something to talk about."

"There's only one reason, Hump," said Dick, "that makes me fear that you may not be able to do all you're talking about."

"What's that?" demanded Humphrey.

"It's your modesty. If you could only get over

your bashfulness you would amount to considerable in the Tait School life."

Humphrey stared blankly at the younger boy and then in a moment broke into loud laughter. "That's a good one. Nobody has ever accused me of being timid. I guess you know that. I don't know what it is to be afraid and there are times when I feel as if I could whip my weight in wild cats. There aren't many fellows in the Tait School of my size and weight that I'm afraid to tackle. Did Jack tell you what the score was?"

"Yes," answered Dick. "He said it was a tie. That each team scored a goal."

"If it hadn't been for the referee we could have scored another touchdown."

"Yes," spoke up Jack, "and so would the Military Academy fellows too. Indeed, I think they would have scored two or three."

"Don't you believe it," laughed Humhprey scornfully. "We have got them right where we want them. The next game, for we'll probably have to have another one to play off the tie, will show which is the better team. I'm going to practice sprinting every day. I think I'll be able to get down under the ball at a pretty lively rate. I don't expect to repeat the run I made to-day, but all the same it helped the Tait School out of a tight place this afternoon. I haven't time to

stay here and talk any more for I have got some letters to write before dinner. There was a reporter there from one of the big papers and he wants to see me. He wants me to give him my picture too. Pretty soon if you look in the *Gazette* you'll see a picture of yours truly.''

CHAPTER XII

A VISIT BY HUMPHREY

IN the midst of Humphrey's boasting, and the arrival of several other boys had increased his noisy claims, there was a sudden break when Redhead and Stone came. They had both been aware of Dick's punishment and naturally Price wished to do all in his power to help the "kid."

"It was a great game! It was a great game!" shouted Dick excitedly, as his visitors entered the room and seated themselves on the bed.

"Too bad you couldn't see it," said Stone.

"Don't I know that?" spoke up Dick quickly. "I sat here in this room listening to the yells until I couldn't stand it any longer and then I went out on the fence where I could hear better. I heard you got hurt," Dick added, turning to his brother as he spoke.

"Do I look so?" laughed Price.

"Not very much, though your face has been scratched some. Tell me about it."

"Oh, I guess the fellow won't try it again," laughed Redhead. "I had one more chance at him before the game was ended. How long are you to be on the limits?"

"I don't know," replied Dick disconsolately. "I'm on probation too."

"Well, I hope you'll be a good boy and not get into any more trouble. It's a foolish thing to do. I have seen fellows that were good on six days in the week and acted as if they had ordinary horse sense, and then all at once they would start off on some line as if they didn't have a brain in their heads."

"You don't know all about it," said Dick in a low voice.

"Of course I don't," acknowledged Redhead.

Humphrey, who had been silent for several minutes was unable longer to remain still. "Don't you fellows think that run of mine was about as good as you ever saw?" he demanded, breaking in upon the conversation.

"It was a great run, Hump," said Stone cordially.

"That's what everybody says," acknowledged Humphrey. "My, when I got started I just made up my mind that there wasn't any Academy fellow on the field who could overhaul me. And there wasn't one."

"So it seems," said Redhead dryly.

"Yes, sir, they were right at my heels, and of course I was handicapped a little by having to carry the ball, but I guess I showed them all a clean pair of heels."

"You have set a pretty good mark for yourself, Hump," suggested Redhead. "The school now will expect you to do the same in every game we have."

"I may not have the chance in every game," said Humphrey pompously. "If it comes, you may be sure I shall take it. I think about half the battle anyway, is being on the lookout for your chance and grabbing it before it can get away from you. That's what I did when I started down the field to-day. I have got to leave you now," he added, "I just dropped in to tell Dick a little about the game. I knew he couldn't go and I thought he would be interested."

"Thank you, Hump," said Dick quietly as the bully departed from the room.

"What does this mean?" demanded Redhead when Humphrey had gone. "Why did that fellow come here?"

"You can search me," replied Dick, as puzzled as his brother by the visitor. "He never has been in my room before unless he wanted to thump me or pour water into my bed."

"Perhaps he has reformed," laughed Stone.

"Don't you believe it!" said Jack, who up to this time had taken small part in the conversation. "Humphrey isn't that kind."

When all the visitors had departed except Redhead and Stone, the former turning to his younger brother said, "Now, Dick, I want to know all about this. From some things that have been told me I'm suspicious that you're getting more of a dose than you deserve. What about your stealing out of the Hull House that night? Did you go alone?"

"No, I didn't."

"Who went with you?"

Dick hesitated a moment and then said, "I haven't told anybody."

"That's all right, kid, but you had better tell me. We know how to keep a secret as well as you do."

"It was Ayers."

"Go on," said Redhead.

"Ayers came to me that afternoon and said he would have a spread in his room the next night if I would go down town with him that night and help him buy the stuff."

"And you went?"

"I did."

"Did he get the limits?"

"No," replied Dick ruefully.

"Why not?"

"Because he wasn't caught."

"How was that?"

"Why when we came back, he stepped inside the door at the foot of the circular stairway and when I went to follow him I found the door locked; and he had all the stuff too," he added foolishly.

"How did you get in?"

"I went around under our room and aroused Jack. He couldn't unlock the door, but he gave me a lift through the window," Dick answered, laughing as he recalled the accident when his roommate had helped him into the building.

"And how did you get caught?"

"Why, Gumshoe was waiting at the head of the stairway and when we came up he caught us both."

"That is he caught you and Jack?"

"Yes."

"Didn't he suspect Ayers? Didn't he know he was one of the party?"

"I guess not."

"How did Gumshoe happen to catch you?" inquired Stone.

"I don't know that. He was right there at the head of the stairway when we came up. We had taken off our shoes so that we wouldn't make any noise, but he was right there on the job. Indeed,

he told me that he knew what we were going to do before we did it."

"That settles it," said Redhead quickly.

"Settles what?" asked Dick.

"Never you mind what it settles. I know and that's enough. Come on, Stone, we must be going."

When the two football players departed from the room Dick stood near the window and watched them as they turned into the wide pathway that led to the street.

In a moment he saw that they had stopped and were talking earnestly to one of the boys. As they both were directly in the line of his vision for a moment he was unable to see who the third party was, but he soon perceived that both his brother and Stone were talking earnestly, if not threateningly, to Ayers.

The recollection of his loss in not being able to witness the game with the Military Academy aroused fresh feelings of anger in Dick's heart which the sight of Ayers did not tend to soothe. Hastily he darted from the room and running swiftly down the stairway met Ayers as he was coming alone into the house.

The sight of his classmate who had been the cause of his troubles instantly aroused fresh anger in the heart of the excited boy. Unmindful of the

fear of discovery he rushed upon his classmate and seizing him with both hands by the collar of his coat he shook him until Ayers' teeth almost seemed to rattle.

"If you don't stop I'll scream," the latter managed to protest at last.

"I'm not going to let you go. You can yell as much as you please," shouted Dick. "What I want of you is to know when you're going to Gumshoe and tell him just exactly how the trouble happened the other night."

"I shan't do it!" screamed Ayers. "You let me go! I shall tell Humphrey on you!"

"I think I'll take you up to Mr. Gumshoe's room. You're a good one for Pussyfoot to see. Then if you tell him just exactly how matters stand I will let you go. But if you don't you may make up your mind that you're going to hear from me every day for the next month. Now which will you do?"

"I shan't do either," growled Ayers, striving desperately to free himself from Dick's grasp.

"There isn't any use, Ayers," said Dick quietly. "I have got you and I'm going to keep you until you say one thing or the other."

"What do you want me to say?"

"That you'll go to Gumshoe and tell him the whole story."

"Never, and if you touch me again you'll be sorry for it."

"I shan't be as sorry if I don't," said Dick, aroused to a fresh outburst of anger by the cowardly obstinacy of the boy in his hands. "Come now," he added, "speak up, which is it? What will you do?"

"I'll do neither!" shouted Ayers in still shriller tones. "Mr. McCann! Mr. McCann!" he called loudly.

Startled by the unexpected call Dick glanced hastily in the direction indicated by Ayers and saw the teacher at that very time coming up the broad walk that led to the Hull House.

CHAPTER XIII

ANOTHER CHARGE

"DO not depart," called Mr. McCann. "Stay where you are. I recognize both of you and I shall at once take action to see that you receive your deserved punishment. It is a disgrace to Tait School that two boys should be seen fighting on the piazza of the Hull House."

"I am not fighting," whined Ayers. "Besides," he added, "I don't know that it's any worse to be seen fighting than it is to fight."

"Be careful, young gentleman," said Mr. McCann in his most prim manner. "I'm in no mood to brook insults from any student. I notice also that you are engaged in this affair," he added, turning to Dick as he spoke. "The perversity of your nature is bound to disclose itself. I told Dr. Hull that he was making a great mistake in not sending you away instead of placing you upon the limits. I was unable to persuade him, however, but now he will plainly see how much better the life of the Tait School will be when you

are eliminated. I am now fully persuaded that Dr. Hull will not permit you to remain longer in this worthy institution."

Under other circumstances Dick would have been inclined to laugh at the somewhat pompous and unnatural manner assumed by the teacher. He was however, so angered and felt so outraged by the charges that had been made against him that he turned sharply upon Mr. McCann and said indignantly, "I'm not fighting! I have not been fighting at all! Ask Ayers."

"He has been picking on me," whined Ayers. "I didn't fight him back so we didn't have any fight, but he has been trying to drag me into the building, and he hurt me."

"According to your own story you are guilty then," declared Mr. McCann, looking angrily at Dick as he spoke. "And now it seems that you are not defending yourself, but are picking upon one of the boys who is unable to do for himself."

"I'm just trying to make him stand up and try to act like a man once in his life," asserted Dick quietly.

"That is very kind of you," sneered Mr. McCann. "Perhaps before long you will be extending your kindness so that the teachers of the Tait School will be included. It strikes me, young

man, that you have enough to do to see that Richard Price, who is now on probation, convinces the teachers that he is worthy of retaining a place in the school."

"But I didn't deserve it," protested Dick sturdily.

"I fancy that soon you will be denying that you left the building after hours. Perhaps you did not go down town after ten o'clock nor steal out of the building."

"If I did I wasn't the only one," said Dick. As he spoke he glanced at Ayers, who seemed to slink away from him in the sudden fear that seized upon him.

"Yes, sir," continued Dick, "if you knew the whole story, Mr. McCann, you wouldn't think I was to blame, or at least you wouldn't think that I was the only one to blame. I was just trying to make one of the fellows go to you and tell you just exactly what took place that night."

For a moment it was plain that Mr. McCann was impressed by Dick's words and manner. He glanced first at him and then looked keenly at Ayers, but neither boy spoke for a time.

"Perhaps," suggested Mr. McCann, "you would like to tell me the names of these other parties that violated the rules of the school the same night you acknowledge that you did."

"No, sir," said Dick promptly. "I haven't anything more to say."

"You acknowledge that you were guilty?"

"I haven't denied it.

"But you say that you were not the only one."

"Yes, sir, that is what I did say."

"I have repeatedly found in my experience that a boy who is deeply guilty is quite prone to try to thrust the guilt from his own shoulders upon the shoulders of those who are innocent. I never had much respect for a boy who did not sturdily face the consequences of his own acts. I greatly admire the lad who is sufficiently honest to assume the load of his own guilt."

"I have been perfectly honest with you," spoke up Dick quickly.

"Indeed, I have cause to question your statement. You accuse other boys of sharing in your escapade and yet you refuse to state who they are."

"I never have been a telltale—yet," Dick added the last word and then turned and looked keenly at Ayers to see what the effect upon his classmate was.

Apparently Ayers was content as long as his name and part were not specifically referred to.

"I have only to say," said Mr. McCann as he entered the building, "that I shall insist upon

both of you reporting to Dr. Hull directly after dinner this evening. Meanwhile I shall see him and relate to him the events as I have found them. A disgraceful attack by one of the Hull House boys upon a lad who is his inferior in physical strength is something upon which the headmaster will not look lightly, I am confident."

When he had spoken, the teacher entered the hall and passing up the stairway walked directly to his room.

"You'll get sent home now," sneered Ayers.

"If I do I shall not be the only fellow that will leave at that time."

"You're going to be a telltale, are you?"

"Not unless I have to be. If I'm sent away from school I shall see to it that Dr. Hull and the other teachers in the Tait School know just exactly what took place the other night when you got me to leave the building and go down town with you and then when I came back you tried to catch me in your trap."

" 'Tried to catch' you is good," sneered Ayers. "It seems to me you were pretty thoroughly caught."

"We haven't come to the end of the chapter yet," laughed Dick scornfully. "You wait."

"If you try to get me into trouble I'll have Hump thump you."

"If he does I'll have Redhead smash him."

"That's right if you're going to be a nice little telltale just do the whole thing," said Ayers mockingly.

"I haven't told any one yet," declared Dick, "but it seems to me that according to your own account, you run to Hump with a story every time any one looks at you. If that isn't telling tales then I don't know what is."

"You'll find out about seven o'clock to-night when you go in the Doctor's office!" was the last taunt of Ayers before he entered the building and sped swiftly to his room.

Dick remained on the piazza for a half-hour. Seating himself on the railing and twisting his feet between the rails he thought over the false position in which he now found himself. He did not deny the justice of the punishment which was measured out to him for leaving the grounds after hours, although he sturdily maintained to himself that it was unfair for him to be put on the limits when the boy who with malice had drawn him into the affair for the very purpose of getting him into trouble, should go free. The fact that he had been unable to witness the football game that afternoon had aroused him almost to a fury and he had seized upon Ayers with the determina-

tion that he would compel the deceitful boy to go to Mr. McCann and confess the whole story. And now instead of getting Ayers into trouble, or compelling him to assume what justly belonged to him, he himself was worse off than before. Placed upon the limits as he had been and also upon probation, what would the headmaster say when Mr. McCann reported that he had been caught fighting one of his own classmates?

And the worst of it was that if there should be no one to dispute Mr. McCann's words, the teacher's account of the affair, if Ayers still kept silent, would be plausible. Not only would it be difficult but almost impossible to explain the occurrence to the teachers.

At that moment Dick saw his roommate entering the grounds of the Hull House. The sight caused him quickly to leap down from his position and as he hailed Jack he said, "Come up to the room. I want to talk to you."

Aware of the excitement under which his schoolmate was laboring Jack at once followed his suggestion and as soon as they both were in their room the door was closed.

Then Dick broke forth. He described his feeling after he had heard about the football game and then how in a moment of anger he had tried

to compel Ayers to go to Mr. McCann or the headmaster and relate the whole story just as it had occurred.

Then he told about the coming of Mr. McCann and the mistaken impression which the teacher had received of the struggle which had taken place on the piazza.

"It gets worse and worse," said Dick almost in despair. "I sometimes think I don't know but that I'd better go home anyway. I wouldn't mind it so much except for my father, and I haven't done any of these things, except that I did steal out of the building that night. But to have Ayers go free, and then worse than all to have him make Mr. McCann believe I was fighting him, puts me in a hole. I tell you I can't stand it and I won't!"

"What are you going to do about it?"

"I don't know. I think I'll send for Redhead and tell him all about it."

"Not yet," said Jack quickly. "It wouldn't do to make the fellows think that you're running to your big brother every time you are in trouble."

"But what shall I do?" persisted Dick. "I'm willing to take all that belongs to me, but I don't intend to take what belongs to other fellows too."

"I don't blame you," said Jack sympathetically, his round face plainly betraying his anxiety for his roommate. "I don't blame you a little bit,

but you don't want to jump out of the frying-pan into the fire."

"Do you think I shall be doing that if I tell Redhead?"

"It isn't what I think, Dick, it's what the other fellows will think."

"Well, probably the Doctor will send me home anyway after I see him to-night and so I don't need to borrow any unnecessary trouble. Come in," Dick added in a loud voice when the conversation was interrupted by a rap.

To the surprise and then to the consternation of both boys Humphrey entered the room and it was apparent at the first glance that he was very angry.

CHAPTER XIV

A NEW PLAN

AS soon as the angry boy had closed the door and turned savagely upon the two inmates he said, "What is the meaning of this?"

Both boys stared blankly at him, but neither spoke.

"What do you mean by it?" demanded Humphrey in still louder tones.

"Not knowing, I can't say," replied Jack. "What are you talking about anyway?"

"Didn't I tell you both to keep your hands off Ayers?"

"I don't know whether you did or not," said Dick. "If you'll tell him to own up to what he did and not try to shift all the trouble off on me he wouldn't have any trouble himself."

"That hasn't anything to do with it," shouted Humphrey. "I told you first thing to keep your hands off Ayers. Now he says that you have been pitching into him."

"I haven't pitched into him at all," declared Dick. "All I did was to try to make him go to Mr. McCann and own up. I don't intend to carry the whole load any longer."

"If you begin to tell tales you'll get in worse than you are now. But that hasn't anything to do with what I'm saying to you. I told you not to lay so much as a finger on Ayers."

"I didn't do it because I wanted to," maintained Dick steadily, "and if you'll get him to stand up straight instead of trying to get me into trouble, there wouldn't anything happen to him. But I'm telling you right now that I shan't stand for his low down tricks any longer."

"I guess you will be mighty careful what you do," shouted Humhprey as he leaped for Dick and seizing him with both hands forced him upon the bed where he threatened to choke him.

Dick, however, did his utmost to defend himself but his opponent was so much stronger than he that he was helpless in his hands."

"Now, see here, Hump," spoke up Jack. "If you know when you're well off you'll leave Dick alone."

"I know when I'm well off and I don't intend to leave him alone."

"Then you'll have to settle with Redhead and my brother."

"What's that?" demanded Humphrey, looking up quickly as he spoke.

"I mean just what I say that if you keep on picking on Dick I'll take it to my brother and tell him the whole story."

"What will you tell him?"

"I'll tell him just exactly how things are."

"And how are they?" Humphrey was still leaning over Dick, whom he had forced into an uncomfortable position on the bed, but at Jack's threat he had partly released him.

"I'll tell him how Ayers gets all your lessons for you and then you protect him in his dirty work around the school. You know as well as I do that he played a sneaking low down trick on Dick and got him into trouble. I don't blame Dick a bit and you don't either. If Ayers tries any more he will have some troubles of his own."

"Do you mean to tell me," spoke up Humphrey, "that you have gone to Redhead and Stone?"

"I don't mean to tell you anything, except what I said. If you don't leave Dick alone you can rest easy that Redhead and my brother won't leave you alone; and Dr. Hull won't either. We're no telltales, but we don't intend to put up with the sneaking tricks of little Willie Ayers. You know, too, Humphrey, that if you don't walk the chalk line you'll get the limits and you know

what that will do for you when the next football game comes on."

It was plain to both boys that Humphrey was not only angered by Jack's sharp words, but that he really was alarmed. His blustering manner was unchanged, but the expression of his face betrayed his fear that Jack's threat was not an empty one.

Slipping from the bed Humphrey still held Dick by the shoulder and without releasing his grasp swung him around the room two or three times. It was plain, however, that he was careful not to hurt the lad.

A moment later, still retaining his hold, he opened the door and prepared to depart.

"Don't forget what I told you," he added as he twisted Dick's arm. "I'll do just exactly what I say I will do and if you make any more trouble for Ayers you'll make more for yourselves."

The door was now opened and both boys were now in the hallway. Angered almost beyond his power to control himself Dick squirmed and twisted as he struck viciously at his tormentor and did his utmost to kick at the same time.

"I shan't leave that little sneak alone," he shouted in his rage. "You tell him to go down to see old Pussyfoot and tell him what happened just the way it was."

"There he is now," said Humphrey quickly as the teacher appeared in the hall.

"I don't care if he is," shouted Dick, in his anger still clinging to the bully.

"Desist, young gentlemen," called Mr. McCann as he ran to the place where the boys were struggling. "Ah, ha, again I see we have an exhibition of your ungovernable temper," he added as he looked directly into the face of Dick. "If you are not in one form of trouble then you are in another. You certainly are the most vicious boy of your age that has entered Tait School since I have been a teacher here. Already I have ordered you to report to Dr. Hull at seven o'clock to-night and I shall now be compelled to add to the report of your vicious attack upon a lad weaker than you, the account of your disgraceful disturbance in your room and in the hall. You are absolutely incorrigible. I have never known a worse case. You also will go to your room now," Mr. McCann added, turning to Humphrey.

When Dick reentered his room and the door had been closed the reaction came. Almost in despair, he turned to his roommate and said, "How is that, Jack? I'm in deeper than ever. It sounds funny doesn't it to say that I am not to blame for any of these things? And I don't believe Dr. Hull

or any teacher in the Tait School would believe me if I told him so."

"Oh, I don't know about that," said Jack. "Dr. Hull I guess wasn't born yesterday. I think he knows what is going on although he feels in duty bound to punish you for your escapades and tricks."

"But I haven't done any tricks," protested Dick. "I tried to get that little sneak, Ayers, to go to the teachers and tell the story just as it is and I'm caught by Gumshoe. Then Humphrey comes to my room and abuses me and I'm the one that's blamed for what he does. Everything is against me. I don't see any chance at all."

"Yes, there is a chance," said Jack confidently. "And what's more I have thought of a plan that we'll have to use."

"What is it?"

"We'll have to form a society. We'll get a roaring old name and we'll make it secret and we'll have it just to protect ourselves and to see to it that Ayers and fellows like him aren't able to put anything over on us again, the way they have been doing on you."

"What made you think of that?"

"Why I heard Redhead tell about a society that the boys formed here when he first came into Hull

House. I guess if they had one then and it worked, we can make it now."

"Maybe you're right," said Dick thoughtfully. "I guess the best thing for us will be to talk it over with Redhead and my brother the first chance we get."

"It would be great fun," declared Jack, who already had become enthusiastic over the proposal. "We must think up a name and decide what officers we'll have and what the secrets will be and where we'll meet and what we'll do and I don't know what all. It will be great fun. You and I will be the charter members."

"Shall we take in Ayers?" inquired Dick.

"Not at first. You may rest easy on that," laughed Jack. "Maybe we'll let him join later, but if he does we'll put him through an initiation that he'll remember as long as he lives. There are a lot of things I should like to try on him. I guess I'll go over to East Hall," Jack added. "If I can find Redhead and my brother maybe I can find out what they did when they started the Tangs."

"What were the Tangs?"

"The society was named the Ancient and Venerable Order of Orangoutangs. They just called it Tangs for short."

"Oh, yes, I have heard about that," laughed

Dick. "They had officers with funny names."

"That's right. One of them was the Lop-Eared Roarer. There was a Cross Eyed Whangdoodle and I don't know how many others."

"It will be great! It will be great!" exclaimed Dick, now more interested in the project of his roommate than apparently he had been for a long time in any of the school events except the football game with the Military Academy. "How soon do you think we can get it started?"

"Oh, it won't take very long."

"And what shall we have for the object?"

"First of all the protection of ourselves from such sneaks as Willie Ayers. We'll have our plans fixed so that he won't dare say or do anything to us. We'll have to have three or four officers."

"And how many members do you think we ought to have?"

"Not more than fifteen. There are forty boys in this house, but some of them belong to the upper forms. We don't want to take them in."

"That's right," exclaimed Dick. "We don't want to make it too large. It will spoil the whole thing if we do. We'll have to have a badge too, shan't we?"

"Yes, first of all we have got to get a name. Have you thought of any?"

"No, I hadn't thought anything about it," laughed Dick. "I hadn't heard anything about it until you spoke of it just now."

"Well, I didn't either," admitted Jack dryly, "but it won't take long to get it going. There's the bell and we had better get ready for supper."

CHAPTER XV

A NEW PROJECT

IT was difficult to determine whether Dick, when after the evening meal he immediately sought the office of the headmaster, was thinking more of the interview awaiting him than he was of the organization which his roommate had suggested.

Speedily, however, he was recalled to his immediate problem when he found himself seated in Dr. Hull's office and in response to the query of that good man he was trying once more to justify himself.

"I'm not telling you how much I regret this continued trouble, Price," said the Doctor quietly. "I wish you would tell me the whole story."

"But I cannot tell you," said Dick quickly.

"Why can't you tell me?"

"Because I'm not a telltale. I have never told on any of the fellows yet and I don't want to begin now."

"And I don't want you to begin now," said the Doctor with a smile. "But there's a part of the

story which puzzles me. If you are willing to tell me just what occurred the night you slipped out of the building and also how it happened that you were reported as fighting on the school piazza, and again that you were having trouble with another boy in the corridor in front of your room, I shall be glad to have you do so. I cannot believe that you are a quarrelsome boy and yet I do not recall a case quite like this. Apparently you have been in trouble since you entered."

"But honestly, Doctor," began Dick impulsively, "it isn't my fault."

The teacher shook his head as he said, "I'm afraid you're not so markedly unlike the other boys as I thought you were when you first entered the school."

"I know that's what they all say and I'm not saying I wasn't guilty when I left the building after hours, but if you only knew, Doctor, you wouldn't—oh, I can't say anything about it. If I begin to talk I shall give away some of the boys."

"Do you think that Mr. McCann knows the names of any of the other parties?"

"I don't see how he can help knowing."

"And yet he has reported no one besides you."

"I know it, and that's the thing I can't understand," said Dick disconsolately. "I know every-

thing looks as if I was guilty. I can't help it, Doctor. I can't explain without giving away some of the others and I can't do that even if you decide to send me home."

"I'm not asking you to do it. What perplexes me is that boys as bright as you are should spend so much of their time and strength in getting into trouble. I'm afraid you have not yet learned what is the first thing in a school like this."

As Dick did not reply and looked questioningly at the headmaster, the latter continued, "It isn't altogether what you learn, Price. It's learning *how*. Boys are sent to us so that we may do our best to help them get their brains into working order. Of course there are boys who throw away even the best of chances and we cannot do much for them. But if the boy is going to make a success of his life he must learn how to work. I don't say he must learn merely to work, but he must learn how. The great difference between men lies right there. Some can do a piece of work in one-fifth the time required by others. Don't you see that in the end one boy will be able to do five times as much as the other? And when they go into the real work of life which one do you think will come out ahead?"

"The fellow that has learned how to work," answered Dick soberly.

"You guessed aright the first time," said the Doctor kindly. "Now the trouble is, Price, that I have found that if most boys don't learn how to work before they are twenty-two, there are very few who ever learn afterward. I wonder if you have ever stopped to think why Mr. Tait gave such a large sum of money to establish and maintain the Tait School."

"I suppose he wanted to do something that would keep his name alive," suggested Dick.

"That may have had something to do with it," acknowledged the headmaster with a smile, "but there are many other ways in which he might have done that if his sole or main thought was a monument. No, he established the Tait School to enable boys who came here to learn how to live. I want you to think about that, for very few people have ever learned that lesson. Now I have preached you my sermon and I want to come again to your own troubles. I am sure there's more than you have told me. At present I shall not add to the punishment I have given you."

"But, Doctor," began Dick. "I don't see why—"

"We'll not discuss that matter at present," said Dr. Hull quietly.

There was an expression, however, in his face that quickly caused the troubled boy to be silent.

"I shall send for you within a day or two, Price," continued the teacher, "and then I shall know better what to do. It may be that I shall have to write your father to take you out of school. I don't want to do that and I hope it will not be necessary, but for the sake of the other boys we simply cannot put up with such things as have been reported to me. You may go."

Bewildered as Dick was when he left the office his mind was by no means clearer when he entered his room. Jack was not there and seating himself before his desk the troubled boy thought over the experiences which had placed him in the position he now held in the eyes of his teachers.

Like most people who begin to pity themselves it was not long before Dick was convinced that no other boy in his place had ever been treated quite so unjustly. That the words of Doctor Hull were no idle threat, when he had told him that it might be necessary to write his father to take him out of school, he was fully convinced. His respect for Dr. Hull was boundless. From his point of view the shortcomings of Mr. McCann were so manifest that he wondered why he was not dismissed from the corps of teachers. It was only too evident that the man did not understand the boys and that the epithet of Pussyfoot and Gum-

shoe which the boys had applied to him were indicative more or less of his true character.

Dick's feeling of depression speedily departed when his roommate burst into the room.

"I have got it! I've got the whole thing!" exclaimed Jack enthusiastically.

"Got what?" demanded Dick.

"Why our society. I talked it over with my brother and Redhead and they told me it would be a good thing. They said too that we must keep it so secret that even the teachers will not know there is such a society. I have got a name for it."

"What is it?"

"Watch Out Everybody. The first letters, you see, are W—O—E. We'll have a badge and we'll have the word WOE on the top and then we'll have a black band like crepe or something of that kind on the lower part and the whole thing in the shape of a shield. We shan't tell anybody what the name is and no one will know what WOE stands for. Of course the fellows in the society will know, but that's all and we'll be on the watch all the while. Redhead says he thinks that we ought not to have over ten members."

"Whom shall we have?"

"Well, there will be you and me, that will make

two. We'll take in Charlie Long and Sam Green and Tom Davidson. That will be five. Then we five will get together and select the other five. Of course they will have to be initiated."

"Won't we?" inquired Dick.

"No, sir, not on your life! We're charter members and the first five don't have to be initiated. We'll have to get up a great initiation too. One thing I'm sure of and that is we'll make a fellow stand on his head with his feet up against the wall and swear that he'll never tell the secrets of the organization and that he'll be on the watch all the while."

"But what's he going to watch?" inquired Dick.

"Why he's going to be on the lookout so that he can help the other fellows. We don't want little Ayers to get any more of the fellows into trouble. You see he works with Humphrey and we've got to do something to protect ourselves. By the way, Dick, do you think Humphrey would dare touch either of us?"

"He touched me all right," said Dick ruefully. "He twisted my arm almost out of its socket."

"Yes, I think he would if he didn't think that your brother or mine would pay him off some time."

"Well, I don't know. He's all stirred up about

the football team and the great run he made. I don't believe he would want to get into trouble with any of the fellows on the team."

"Yes, but he's such a brag that he'll think he's the whole show and that if anybody tries to put him out or keep him out it will go hard with them."

Dick shook his head, but the conversation speedily turned to the subject of the WOES.

"We can have a meeting of the first five to-morrow afternoon after the study hour and then we'll talk about the other five and draw up our rules and get ready to initiate some of the other boys. Just think who the best ones will be and I'll do the same. There goes the bell and we've got to get ready for study-hour now. By the way, Dick, Gumshoe told me this afternoon that if I did as well in my classes the next two weeks as I have done the last two that he would let me do my work in my room instead of the study-hall. I think I could do twice as much if I knew that his gazelle eyes were not turned on me all the while. Don't forget about the meeting to-morrow and if you see Long or Davidson tell them what's up."

"All right," responded Dick cheerfully as he gathered his books together and in obedience to

the summons by the bell at once started toward the assembly-room where the boys were to do their evening work under the direction of Mr. McCann.

CHAPTER XVI

WOES

BOTH Dick and his roommate were so keenly excited by the plan they had just formed, by which a secret society was to be organized, that it is to be feared their lessons did not receive all the attention they deserved.

As soon as the study-hour was ended, both boys returned quickly to their room and worked out certain further details in the formation of the WOE.

"I'm thinking," said Dick disconsolately when at last both boys prepared for bed, "that I shall be known as a 'former member' pretty soon. If the Doctor sends me home as he threatens to do—"

"He didn't threaten you," interrupted Jack quickly. "The Doctor doesn't threaten anybody. What he told you was that he was afraid he might have to send you home. But he told you too that he would look into the whole affair and if he does I guess you won't start for home this week. Besides there are our brothers and all the fel-

lows in the house who will take a hand in the matter if the worst comes."

Comforted by the confidence of his schoolmate Dick did not long lie awake after they had sought their bedroom. And yet the boy was seriously troubled. He was well aware that Dr. Hull had spoken no idle words and that when he had said what he told him Dick was well aware that not one word had been spoken lightly.

Assuring himself that he would tell Redhead the following day all that had occurred he soon forgot his troubles and was sleeping soundly.

Dick's interview with his older brother the following day was only in part satisfactory. It was plain that Redhead was seriously perplexed if not troubled. Assuring his younger brother, however, that he would do his utmost in his behalf he finally departed from Hull House with the parting injunction, "Now you kid, see if you can get through this day without geting into a scrape. I am afraid to trust you alone and if you think it will help you any to have me come over and spend the day with you I'll do it."

"I'm not going to have any trouble to-day. If I really need you, Redhead," he added as his brother departed, "I'll send for you again, but don't you worry, I'm going to come through all right."

That afternoon directly after the study hour a preliminary meeting of the WOES was held in the room of Dick and Jack. The three boys whom they had selected to make up the first five also were present. Secrecy was pledged by all concerning the meeting and it was agreed that the proceedings should be conducted in as silent a manner as possible.

Accordingly after Jack was fully convinced that the other boys rooming in Hull House had departed from the building, he returned to his room and placed a chair against the door to prevent its being opened unexpectedly.

"Now then, the first thing I suppose," began Jack, "is that we've got to have a chairman of this meeting."

"I nominate Jack Stone," said Sam Green quickly.

"No," said Jack, shaking his head. "Maybe I'll be the chief officer by and by, but I don't want to be chairman. I have got to make a speech and a chairman doesn't do that you know.'

"All right," said Sam. "I nominate Charlie Long."

"I second the motion," called Dick promptly.

"All in favor say aye," demanded Jack before Long could give voice to his modest protests.

"Unanimously elected," declared Jack. "Now

then, take the chair," he added as he turned abruptly about and seizing his classmate by the neck thrust him bodily into the chair to be occupied by the chairman.

The new and as yet the sole officer of the WOES looked foolishly about the room and then said, "What's next?"

"We've got to have a secretary," suggested Jack.

"That's so," acknowledged the chairman.

"I nominate Sam Green," continued Jack. "Here's your pencil and pad so that you can take notes of the meeting."

"I haven't been elected yet," protested Sam, modestly.

"All in favor of the motion say aye," called the chairman.

Together the boys unanimously voiced their approval.

"Don't make so much noise, fellows," warned Jack. "Somebody will hear us. This is a secret society, you know, and we don't want to spoil it at the start."

"All right," said Sam in a low voice, "I suppose I'll have to serve.'

"Now then, what's next?" demanded the chairman. As he spoke he looked at Jack inquiringly and in response to the unspoken appeal the latter

arose and said, "I suppose we'll have a constitution. Everybody does."

"What's a constitution?" demanded Davidson.

"It's a—it's a—it's something or other that you have to have when you organize a society."

"Oh, I see," said Davidson mockingly. "You make it just as clear as mud. I don't see what we want to have a constitution for anyway. We can call the fellows together whenever we want to and if we want to lick the tar out of Ayers why we can do it. We don't have to have any constitution to do that. All we want is a little muscle and mighty little of that. Honestly, fellows, that kid Ayers hasn't got the muscle in his arm that my little sister has."

"He's got some brains in his head though," suggested Sam.

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Davidson, abruptly rising from his seat and threateningly approaching the speaker.

"Meeting will come to order," declared the chairman, rapping with his fists on the desk as he spoke.

"All right, Mr. Chairman," said Jack. "I want to read a document that I have prepared."

"We will listen to Mr. Stone," said the chairman. "Look here, you young Davidson, if you

don't keep quiet we'll treat you worse than we're going to treat little Willie."

"We ought to have a sergeant-at-arms," suggested Dick.

"The chairman will take that duty upon himself, at least at the present meeting," declared Charlie Long, glaring upon the noisy charter member as he spoke.

Meanwhile Jack had arisen and drawn from his pocket a paper which he unfolded with particular zest. The borders of several sheets of legal cap had been pasted together and the document at first sight presented a formidable appearance.

"Mr. Chairman," began Jack, "I beg to present the following statement: Whereas a condition has arose in the Tait School—"

"That's not right," interrupted Sam Green; "you mean a condition having arisen."

"That's right," acknowledged Jack, taking a pencil and making the necessary correction. "Now I'll begin again,—a condition having arose, I mean having arisen—in the Tait School, whereby the rights of the separate and distinct individuals who are members of the aforesaid school are—are—I guess the word is recklessly, no, it isn't either," he added, "it's ruthlessly."

"What does that mean?" demanded Sam Green.

"Why it means,—it means,—I don't know just what it does mean," said Jack, "but I guess we'll all know what is intended when I finish the paragraph."

"Better go back to the beginning and get a fresh start," suggested the chairman. "You want to get a good start the way a fellow does when he jumps over a brook."

"All right, then," said Jack. "If you fellows will pay attention I'll read it again. 'Whereas a condition having arisen in the Tait School whereby the rights of separate and distinct individuals are ruthlessly trampled upon and whereas the declaration of independence by our forefathers,' "—

"How many?" interrupted Sam Green again.

"Our forefathers," said Jack sternly. "I'm not counting them I'm just saying forefathers, that's all."

"Yes, I know," acknowledged Sam, "but what does 'fore' mean?"

"You know what it means as well as I do," said Jack.

"I guess that's true, for I don't know anything about it. What does it mean?"

"Order! Silence!" commanded the chairman. "Mr. Stone will begin his second paragraph and read again without interruption."

"Mr. Chairman," broke in Sam, "I declare to you that my separate and individual rights are being ruthlessly trampled upon. I have a perfect right to ask just as many questions as I—"

"If the member of the WOES that talks more than all the others put together doesn't become silent the chairman will be obliged to treat him as he deserves," declared Long.

"That's more than he is able to do," said Sam belligerently.

"Silence!" ordered the chairman. "We've had only part of the important document read. Will Mr. Stone proceed with his reading?"

Thus bidden Jack resumed. "'And also whereas the aforesaid Tait School is no longer able to give, grant or devise said right to the pursuit of happiness, now therefore be it resolved: That we the undersigned do form a society for mutual protection, help, benefit, coöperation, mutual welfare, and the good of the above said Tait School. This Society shall be called the Watch Out Everybody.

"'Its badge shall be a small gold shield on which shall be printed in enamel the initials W O E. Below the initials there shall be a black band which looks a whole lot like crêpe.

"'The object of the WOE shall be as above mentioned.'"

"What's that?" demanded Sam.

"Why, mutual protection, help and welfare and all the rest."

"Oh, I see," said Sam as he resumed his writing.

" 'Its members,' " continued Jack, " 'shall be limited to ten. Of these ten the first five shall be Richard Price, Samuel Green, Charles Long, Thomas Davidson and the undersigned. Not one of the five shall be initiated, but all new members shall be initiated according to the ancient and venerable rites of this society. Its secrets shall be known only to the members. Any fellow who shall tell any of the secrets shall be treated as he deserves. The initiation shall be carefully thought out by the charter members and hereinafter no one shall be admitted unless he stands for the initiation. The meetings shall be held once a week and whenever the President wants to call the fellows together.

" 'The officers shall be a President who shall be called Chief Calamity Howler. There shall be a secretary who shall be called the Calamity Scribe. There shall be a Treasurer too and he must keep all the money—' "

"I'll be the treasurer," interrupted Tom Davidson.

"You couldn't be treasurer to a hencoop," said Dick scornfully. "Your allowance is gone the

first day after you get it. The treasurer has to *keep* money."

"'Every fellow,'" continued Jack, "'shall have both a number and a name, which shall be kept secret by everyone of the WOES.'"

"That's great!" exclaimed Tom when Jack had finished reading his weighty document. "Where did you get all that stuff?"

"Never you mind where I got it," retorted Jack. "It's all right and that's enough for you and all the rest of us."

For a half-hour the boys remained and talked over various schemes and plans for their newly formed society. The interest and excitement steadily increased as the possibilities of the organization were more plainly seen.

At last when the boys left the room something of a reaction had come from the long continued suppression.

When the door of the room was opened Dick gave Tom suddenly a violent push. He was horrified a moment later to discover that he had thrust his classmate and fraternity member with full force upon Mr. McCann who at that moment was near the door. Instantly teacher and scholar fell together upon the floor.

CHAPTER XVII

THE INITIATION

FOR a moment the startled boys stared blankly at the sight before them.

Hastily Tom sprang to his feet and then assisted Mr. McCann to arise.

The teacher was dusty and it was instantly manifest that he was plainly angered by the mishap which had overtaken him.

"Ah, it is you, I see!" he shouted as he saw Dick before him. "Did you have anything to do with this?"

"Yes, sir."

"What did you do?"

"I pushed Tom."

"It is as I fancied," said the teacher bitterly. "There's no phase or form of mischief in this school in which you are not the ringleader. You saw me coming along the corridor and in the most ungentlemanly manner conceivable you thrust another boy only less troublesome than you directly upon me. Indeed, I shall report to Dr. Hull the fact that you are again in trouble, because you

have pushed in the most brutal manner a boy upon me while I was passing your room. Indeed, some of my bones might have been broken."

"I guess we never would have cracked his skull," whispered Jack to Sam.

"Whatever is wrong I come directly to your room and always find the guilty party. You are the one incorrigible culprit in the Tait School," piped Mr. McCann, his anger apparently increasing as he continued to speak. "I shall report you to the headmaster."

"And I shall not wait for you to report," retorted Dick sharply. "I'm going to go right straight to him myself and tell him the whole affair."

"Want us to come with you, Dick?" called Sam. "We'll all stand by you."

"We saw the whole performance," declared Long, "and we'll be glad to put in a good word telling exactly how it happened."

"No," responded Dick, who had halted a moment at the head of the stairway. "I don't want anybody to come with me."

For half an hour Dick was seated in the Doctor's office.

Later when he returned to his room he refused to tell even Jack what had taken place in the interview.

"I'll tell you pretty soon, Jack," he explained, "but I can't tell you just yet."

"Is the Doctor going to send you home?"

"Not now anyway."

"What do you mean by that? Is he going to send you later?"

"I can't tell you anything about it," said Dick.

"Are you still on the limits?"

"I guess so, nothing was said about it."

"That's too bad for there's a football game Saturday afternoon with the High School team from Marion."

"I know it," said Dick disconsolately, "but I see where I don't get any more football this year."

"Oh, well, it may come out all right," said Jack more cheerfully.

When the boys arose from their seats in the dining-room an hour afterward, Dick and Jack smiled grimly at each other when they saw Mr. McCann start toward the office of the headmaster.

"Gumshoe's a bit late," said Dick with a smile. "He won't have any news to give the Doctor, for I told him everything."

"You didn't tell him about the WOES, did you?"

Dick glanced scornfully at his roommate and did not reply.

When Mr. McCann returned from the Doctor's office and did not stop on the broad piazza where a score of boys were assembled once more Dick grinned at Jack as in a low voice he said, "I guess there's nothing doing."

"It isn't his fault," retorted Jack.

Two days passed, however, and as no summons came for Dick he and his roommate decided that whatever report Mr. McCann may have made, it had not changed conditions for the troubled boy who was still on the limits.

On that same day it had been arranged that the five WOES were to meet in the unused attic of the school building. It is true there was no stairway leading to this vacant room, but this fact was easily avoided because the distance between the floors was not high and a knotted rope served as a means of climbing.

Promptly at the appointed time the five WOES made their way to the unoccupied room. A screen was placed before the trap door through which entrance into the room was made.

"The High Calamity Sergeant-at-arms will summon those who are to be initiated into the mysteries of the WOES," said the High Calamity Howler in a sepulchral tone. "Meanwhile the WOES will don their uniforms."

The uniforms consisted of long, leather-coated

cloaks of a bright blue color. Evidently these cloaks had done duty in some political parade and had been obtained for the present purpose. High conical hats adorned the tops of the heads of all boys, from which a mask fell in front of their faces leaving slits for the eyes.

Curiosity and eagerness to join a secret society had caused all five of the boys who had been selected by the charter members of the WOES eagerly to accept the invitation. The five new boys assembled in a room on the floor below and singly they were to make the ascent to the attic.

Having gained the upper floor they were one by one to be presented to the assembly and if considered worthy were to be received into the membership.

The first to ascend the rope was Rolla Simmonds, a strong, active boy of fifteen. As soon as his eyes had become accustomed to the somewhat dim light of the attic he laughed as he glanced at the motionless and phantastic figures of the charter members.

"Is this Rolla Simmonds?" inquired one of the WOES in a voice deep and hollow.

"That's what they call me at home," laughed Rolla.

"It is well. Have you the necessary courage and full qualifications to entitle you to be enrolled

among the WOES?" in still more sepulchral tones demanded the boy who had spoken before.

"I guess that's all right."

"Very well then, his eyes must be blinded."

Rolla at first was inclined to protest, but he speedily thought better of his decision and a handkerchief was bound tightly about his eyes.

Five times he was marched slowly around the attic and then was abruptly halted. At the same time he was aware that at least two of the WOES had grasped his arms, one on the right and one on the left.

"You're now in the presence of the Chief Calamity Howler of the WOES," groaned a voice in his ear.

"I am glad of it," answered Rolla.

"Silence," ordered someone. "It is no time for levity. Is your name Rolla Simmonds?"

"It is."

"You are a pupil in the Tait School?"

"That's right."

"And you are eager to be initiated into the WOES?"

"I can't say that I'm eager to be initiated but I want to join."

"Silence," again came the sepulchral order.

"How can I be silent and yet answer your questions?" demanded Rolla.

Ignoring the query the deep mournful voice again demanded, "Do you acknowledge that you are a son of woe?"

"Say 'yes,'" whispered a voice in his ear.

"Yes," said Rolla.

"Have you ever suffered undeservedly from the malice of others?"

"You're right I have."

"Have you debts still unpaid?"

"What do you mean? Money I owe at the store?"

"Silence," again said the voice. "There is no reference here to such earthly things as money. Have you debts unpaid?"

"I guess I have."

"Are you eager to pay them?"

"I suppose I am."

"Do you promise if you are admitted into the Ancient and Venerable Order of WOES that you will watch out and protect all its members?"

"I will do my best."

"And will you act according to orders?"

"Yes."

"Do you promise that you will keep all the secrets of this august body?"

"Sure I will."

"If you ever consciously or unconsciously re-

veal any of its great secrets are you willing to be drawn and quartered as your reward?"

"Say 'yes,'" again whispered the voice in Rolla's ear.

"Yes," assented the boy.

"If you ever reveal any secrets are you willing that your tongue shall be burned?"

"As far as I know I am."

"Very well, stick out and protrude your tongue."

"I don't want to."

"Do it!" said the voice sternly.

In response to the command Rolla's tongue protruded about a half-inch or so from his mouth but it was quickly withdrawn and a loud yell followed.

"Quit that!" shouted Rolla. "You're burning my tongue!"

"If you are unable to endure such a small test as that which has been applied to you then I very much fear lest you are unworthy to be enrolled as a full member among the WOES."

"But you burned my tongue."

"It was very slight. Only a touch of pepper simply as a test was applied, to discover if your tongue is sensitive. In case we wish to apply a dire penalty we were compelled first to ascer-

tain whether or not your tongue was able to taste pepper."

"I found out, whether you had or not," said Rolla sharply.

"Does any one know any reason why Rolla Simmonds should not be admitted as a member of the 'WOES'?"

Groans followed the question, but no objection was expressed.

"Then I bid you advance to the second stage of the rite of initiation," said the voice in its lowest tones.

Slowly and still blindfolded Rolla was led several times around the room and then in straight lines from one end to the opposite. Several times he was aware that apparently he was being led up steep inclines and then as carefully led down. All proceedings were deliberate and his steps were slow and sure.

"Reach forth with your left foot," whispered a voice in his left ear. When Rolla had complied with the command a voice on the opposite side said, "Extend and put the right foot forth."

"Now leap. Leap for your life," sternly ordered the one who had addressed him at the beginning.

"I won't. I won't do it. I must be twice as high as the house now."

Abruptly Rolla was pushed and a wild yell escaped his lips as he fell.

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"He won't. He won't," groaned the WOES together.

"He will. He must. He shall," groaned the leader.

Abruptly Rolla was pushed and plainly his conviction that he was high in the air was well founded for a wild yell escaped his lips as he fell. His fall, however, was only a few inches and into a large rubber bath tub, which had been stretched between the beams for this special purpose. Up a slight incline Rolla had been led, but in reality he was not more than two feet above the floor when he wildly leaped into the tub. As he fell the bandage was snatched from his eyes and he was quickly aware that five cloaked and masked figures had joined hands and were circling about the place in which he was standing.

CHAPTER XVIII

DICK WATCHES A GAME

"YOU are now a regular WOE!"

"W-O-E," shouted the voices in unison as the boys continued to move swiftly in a circle about Rolla. "W stands for Watch, O stands for Out and E stands for Everybody. Watch Out Everybody! That's what the WOES are for. Your number is 691½, your name will be given you as soon as you have proved yourself worthy. Meanwhile reach forth and extend your right hand so that you may learn the grip and be welcomed officially into this band of brothers."

Slowly and solemnly the final rites were performed and as soon as Rolla had been proclaimed in "good and regular standing" he was given a uniform similar to those worn by the charter members and a second boy was summoned from below.

The performance which had been enacted for Rolla Simmonds was now repeated. There was no more enthusiastic member of the band nor one

that joined more heartily in initiating the remaining members than he.

In fact as the ceremonies were repeated, for the remaining boys, who were summoned one by one, those who had been last to be received into the membership were the most active in assisting to initiate their friends.

When finally the entire five had gone through the experiences required for initiation, then cloaks and hats and masks were laid aside and there was a brief meeting to consider what steps in the progress of the WOES should next be taken.

"We aren't going to increase the membership yet awhile," declared Long. "We want to keep this number ten just as it is. If Dick isn't taken off the limits or if he has any more trouble with Humphrey or Billy Ayers then we know what our next job will be. Watch Out Everybody! Everybody Watch Out! The meeting is now disbursed."

One by one the boys descended the rope, each carrying the strange garments in which he had been clothed. Not one waited for his companion to join him, but swiftly made his way to his own room.

When Dick returned to his room, for he was the last to depart from the attic, Jack said to him in a low voice, "Gumshoe has been here."

"What did he want?"

"He says that Dr. Hull wants to see you right away in his office. What do you suppose is wrong now?"

"I don't know," said Dick somewhat disconsolately. "I'm so used now to getting in wrong that probably something else has turned up to make trouble for me."

"Do you think the Doctor has heard anything about the WOES?"

"I don't see how he could have heard anything, but I'll know pretty soon, Jack, for I'm going right down."

A half-hour later Dick returned and found his roommate waiting for him.

"What is it? What is it?" whispered Jack eagerly before Dick had closed the door behind him.

"I can't tell you much yet. All I know now is that I'm to have Saturday afternoon off and go to the game."

"Good for you! Fine!" shouted Jack, dancing about the room and slapping his roommate upon the back.

"Of course it's fine. I feel as if I had been let out of jail."

"It will be a great game and I'm glad you're going to see it."

The enthusiasm of the two boys was great during the time intervening before the great game was to be played. Indeed, Jack apparently displayed more feeling than his roommate, but Dick quietly had computed the number of minutes that must pass before his freedom for Saturday afternoon was to be obtained.

And Doctor Hull had informed him that his freedom was to be only for that afternoon. Dick had promised that he would be back in Hull House within fifteen minutes after the close of the game.

Meanwhile the little badges which had been ordered for the WOES had been received and distributed among the ten members.

Striving to appear unconscious of the pins which were fastened on the vests of the members every boy in reply to the many questions asked by his curious classmates concerning the society, simply answered solemnly, "WOE, WOE, WOE."

Indeed, when several of the members were together and the query was made they too united in the groan by which the three letters were made still more emphatic.

Even the WOES, however, were in a measure forgotten when Saturday afternoon came and Dick and Jack hastened to the football field. They were early and had no difficulty in finding desirable seats, inasmuch as a section had been re-

served for the boys of the Tait School. This was commonly known as the cheering section. Scattered here and there were various teachers of the school who were present to see that their charges did not become unduly aroused or thoughtlessly abusive of their opponents.

On the opposite side of the field a similar section had been reserved for the boys and girls of the High School, while the friends of that school were seated in the adjoining sections.

Not long after the entrance of Dick and Jack the rival teams made their appearance on the field. The High School eleven preceded the team of the Tait School. The coming of each however was greeted by prolonged shouts and cheers from its friends.

"Gee!" exclaimed Dick. "It seems good to be out of the Hull House. I had forgotten it was such fun to come down to the field."

"It's a shame you can't play on the junior team," growled Jack whose eyes seldom turned away from the sight before him.

Conversation lagged, however, in the intense interest with which the boys were watching the preliminary practice. And when at last the two teams took their positions on the field and it was seen that the High School had the kickoff, Dick's excitement was almost beyond control.

When the whistle sounded and a brawny High School boy kicked far down the field, Dick arose in his seat to discover who had caught the ball. He was unable to see any more distinctly when he was standing than when he was seated and he could not have explained even to himself why he stood up. A loud call at that moment from the boys who were seated behind him to "Sit Down! Down in Front!" caused him abruptly to resume his seat.

"They outweigh our fellows fifteen pounds," he said in a low voice to Jack. "At least that's what Redhead told me."

"I guess that's right."

"They look the part. Look there!" added Dick, "See Redhead run with that ball. See him run! See him run!" he added excitedly, as loud cheers arose from the Tait contingent.

And Redhead Price like an eel was working his way through the opposing team. Twice apparently he was tackled, but each time he managed to wriggle free and when at last he was downed he had gained the thirty yard line of the opposing team.

Here, however, when a mass play was tried it was found impossible for the Tait boys to gain. The line stood like a rock and no openings could be found in it.

A groan arose from the Tait side when on the third down the ball was fumbled and a young giant on the High School team secured it.

He was unable to make much distance, however, and when his teammates lined up again a desperate attempt was made to break the Tait line by throwing the heavier players against it.

And the plan apparently was successful. Three times the High School team made first down. It looked now as if the lighter Tait School eleven was unable to stop their heavy rivals.

Again there was a fumble and when the mass of players was untangled a shout arose from the Tait side of the field when it was discovered that Stone had the ball.

An attempt at a run around left end was followed by another attempt around the right, but not more than one yard was gained in each play. A third attempt to open up a hole by a drive at right tackle succeeded no better. And then the ball was passed back to Hoag, the fullback, for a kick.

After the ball had been run back twenty yards the boys lined up again and once more the High School eleven began to drive its lighter opponents down the field. Steady gains were made until the ball was on the twenty-five yard line. The players now were directly in front of the goal, but

so nearly exhausted were the boys by their efforts that, instead of trying to pound their way through the line, the ball was given their full back who immediately kicked a drop. The entire High School crowd arose as the ball was seen to pass above the cross bar and directly between the posts. Again and again there were cheers and shouts and a long continued assertion that Trimble the High School kicker was all right.

Apparently not disheartened by the success of their opponents, the Tait School kicked off after the players had resumed their position. And so closely did the ends follow the ball that the High School player who received it in his arms was unable to run it back. Again there were fierce scrimmages, the High School gaining slightly at times, although it was plain that several of the eleven had used up much of their strength in their former sweep down the field.

It was in the third quarter when Redhead Price received the ball from a kick and started down the field. Again and again his eel-like efforts succeeded, and squirming, crawling, running, pushing he was not downed until he had gained the forty-yard line. There a forward pass was tried but it failed. Again the ball was passed back to Redhead, who tried to circle the left end. He was tackled so severely, however, that when at

last the most of the players arose it was seen that he was injured. The game was delayed as long as the rules permitted and then it was decided that the injured Redhead should be taken, at least for a time, out of the game.

Redhead, however, was protesting loudly. Indeed, Dick was able to see that the tears were coursing down the cheeks of his brother and that he was not fully aware of what he was doing.

He was striking out with his fists in every direction loudly refusing to be removed from the game. His protests, however, were unavailing and when the game was resumed a fresh player had taken the place of Redhead Price.

CHAPTER XIX

DICK REPORTS

THE sight of his brother being carried from the grounds, the tears streaming down his face and the excited player protesting loudly and vigorously against his removal from the game, strongly impressed Dick for a brief time. His interest in the game, however, was too intense to permit of a long delay.

The fourth quarter began with the High School still leading. Although their players, as has been said, were heavier than those of the Tait School it was plain now that they were showing more markedly the effects of the tense struggle. Evidently several of their star players were tired almost to the point of exhaustion. Pluckily, however, they continued the game.

"Look at Humphrey," suggested Jack as he nudged his friend; "he doesn't intend to get hurt."

Dick laughed loudly when he obeyed his roommate's suggestion and saw Humphrey at every onslaught, instead of rushing at the player opposite him, dart speedily to one side.

"That's a shame," said Dick. "He ought to be taken out of the game."

"He certainly is cautious," laughed Jack. "I don't believe you or I could do much worse."

"There goes a fellow around his end," shouted Dick as one of the High School players swiftly passed Humphrey. His gain, however, was speedily lost, for Stone tackled him and turned him back several yards before he was finally thrown.

Suddenly as the ball passed into the possession of Tait School there was a commotion in the lines and a moment later Stone was seen with the ball under his arm running swiftly toward the goal of his rivals. Only one player now was between him and the coveted goal. A wild shout arose from the supporters of the Tait School as all stood up and joined in a loud call upon Stone to make a touch down.

"Touch down! Touch down!" resounded on every side.

Whether or not he was inspired by the encouraging shouts is not known. At all events Stone successfully dodged the High School player and still running at his utmost speed soon crossed the line and placed the ball squarely behind the goal.

A few minutes later when the goal was kicked

and the Tait School was safely in the lead a measure of quiet was restored but the excitement of Dick and Jack was still intense.

Dick had been watching so intently the movements of the players that he did not notice a change in the seat directly in front of him. Two of his classmates had been seated there, but unknown to Dick they had given their seats to Mr. and Mrs. McCann, who had come late to the game.

"I tell you," shouted Dick, "that's the greatest play I ever saw! Isn't that great?" he added, at the same time seizing the person in front of him by both ears and shaking his head until suddenly he became aware that he had grasped not the head of his classmate but that of the teacher with whom he had had most trouble—Mr. McCann.

"What is the meaning of this? What is the meaning of this, sir?" demanded poor Mr. McCann, abruptly rising and turning sharply about upon his tormentor.

"I—I—I don't know," stammered Dick. "I didn't mean to do it. It's all a mistake. I—I—I beg your pardon. I'm sorry."

Meanwhile there was a partly suppressed laugh heard on every side.

Aware of his ridiculous plight the face of the teacher flushed scarlet and shaking his finger in the face of Dick he said, "I shall see that you are

amply punished for this outrageous action. It was against my wish and advice that you were permitted to come here this afternoon. Wherever you are there is trouble."

Calling to his wife Mr. McCann at once departed from the grounds.

"There, you see I'm in wrong again," groaned Dick.

"It was worth it," laughed Jack, slapping his knees. "I wish you could have seen his face. I could see from where I sat and I tell you his expression was not a happy one."

"Probably not," admitted Dick ruefully, "but I saw Brown there just a minute before and I never noticed that he had gone and Pussyfoot had taken his place. Now I know he did, though, and I'm in for more trouble."

"I tell you the Doctor will have a good laugh when he hears about it. He may punish you, but he will laugh just the same. I tell you I think he knows Gumshoe about as well as the boys do. Hello, look at that!" he added abruptly.

Again Stone was called upon by his teammates to display his skill as a drop kicker. Withdrawing several yards behind the line he waited with outstretched hands for the ball to be passed to him.

In a moment the ball was on its way, although

the High School team instantly did their utmost to break through the Tait line. Their efforts were futile, however, for receiving the ball Stone kicked it deftly and quickly.

A silence tense and deep rested over the field while the eyes of all followed the slowly moving ball. A groan arose when for a moment it seemed that the ball must drop below the cross-bar. The sound, however, was instantly changed into a wild cry when it was seen that the football instead of dropping below struck squarely upon the bar and then bounded over it.

"A Goal! A Goal!" shouted the Tait boys, as they threw their caps into the air and danced and slapped one another on their backs.

"And only two minutes to play," said Jack gleefully, when at last the teams lined up for further play, while the spectators slowly resumed their seats.

In spite of the determination and courage of the High School players only a slight advance was made in the remaining time and when the whistle sounded the ball was on the Tait forty yard line.

With a wild whoop the Tait boys leaped from their seats and dashed upon the field. There were cheers for the team and for every individual member. The cheering had been repeated when a call for Stone was made.

"I've got to go," murmured Dick disconsolately. "I promised the Doctor I would be back in my room fifteen minutes after the game."

Reluctantly Dick turned away, though until he reached the gate his head was turned so that he might see the snake dance of the boys as in a long line they wound in and out and back and forth across the field.

Then mindful of the brief time yet remaining Dick ran swiftly toward the Hull House and entered the building just as the quarter-hour was rung out by the chimes in the tower of the gymnasium.

"I made it," he said glumly. "I guess I'll go and report."

Quickly making his way to the office he was pleased when he discovered the Doctor present and still more pleased when he smiled gravely as the boy entered the room.

"You are on time, I see, Price," said the Doctor kindly.

"Yes, sir," replied Dick, speaking with difficulty. "I had to run most of the way, but I made it. I told you I would and I intended to keep my promise."

"I believed you would keep it," said the Doctor kindly. "Have you fallen into any more trouble this afternoon?"

"Yes, sir, I have," acknowledged Dick in a low voice, his recollection of his treatment of Mr. McCann causing his cheeks to blush.

"What was it?"

"Why, Stone made a great run for our team. I was so excited I didn't know just what I was doing. Right in front of me Brown had been sitting and just as Stone crossed the goal line I reached over and grabbed Brown, at least I thought it was Brown, by both ears trying to wake him up. He had been sitting there as if he was asleep. I didn't know he had given his seat to Mr. and Mrs. McCann and it seems it was the teacher whose ears I had grabbed."

Dr. Hull looked at the ceiling and swallowed with apparent difficulty two or three times before he spoke.

"And what occurred then, may I ask?" he said at last though his voice was trembling when he spoke.

"Why, Mr. McCann didn't like it."

"Naturally. Is that all that occurred?"

"Why, no, sir, a good many of the boys and I guess some of the people too were laughing and that made Mr. McCann madder still."

"Did he do anything?"

"No, sir, he just took his wife and left."

"Now, Price," said the Doctor, looking keenly

over his glasses at his youthful visitor, "do you mean to tell me that you did not know it was Mr. McCann whose ears you held?"

"Honestly, Doctor," began Dick, rising from his chair as he spoke, "I didn't know it. At least I didn't know it then. When Mr. McCann turned partly around and looked at me then I saw what I was doing and I dropped his head like a hot potato."

"Like a what?" demanded the teacher.

"Just as quickly as I could," stammered Dick.

"Price," continued the Doctor. "I wish you would remain in my office. I shall be gone only two or three minutes."

"Yes, sir," responded Dick.

To his amazement in a brief time Dr. Hull returned accompanied by Ayers.

"Be seated, Ayers," directed the teacher as he pointed to a chair and then seated himself before his desk. Apparently he was disregarding the glances which passed between the two startled boys. For both were startled and neither understood why the other was there.

"Now, boys," began the Doctor. "I have a few questions I want to ask. I shall not detain you long."

Turning then to Dick the headmaster said, "Did you leave the building and go down town after

the lights were out two weeks ago last Thursday night?"

"Yes, sir," responded Dick promptly.

"Did you go alone?"

Dick was silent.

Again the Doctor inquired. "Was any one with you? Why do you not answer me?"

"I cannot tell you," answered Dick miserably.

"Very well. Were you fighting with Humphrey in your corridor last Friday?"

"No, sir,—that is not exactly. I was not fighting Humphrey. I was just trying to defend myself."

"Did you recently," began the Doctor apparently ignoring the reply, "push a boy out of the door of your room directly upon Mr. McCann while he was passing?"

"Yes, sir, I did, but I didn't know that Gum—I mean Mr. McCann was there."

"Then it was purely accidental, was it?"

"Yes, sir. It was."

"Price, are you doing well in your classes?"

"I suppose I might do better, Doctor," answered Dick promptly.

"In that particular you seem to agree cordially with your teachers. Now then," continued the headmaster, turning to Ayers, "I have a few questions to ask you. Did you leave the building after

study hour and after lights were out two weeks ago last Thursday night?"

"Who says I did?" demanded Ayers, turning as he spoke and looking fiercely at Dick.

"That doesn't matter. All I want is to have you answer my question. Did you or did you not?"

"Well, I suppose I did."

"Did any one go with you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Will you tell me who it was?"

"I'm not a tell-tale, but I guess you don't need to have me tell you, Doctor," whined Ayers. "I guess you wouldn't have to look very far beyond this room."

"Did you ever stack Price's room?"

"The little tell-tale,—" began Ayers.

"Stop that!" said the Doctor sharply. "Answer my question."

"I was there when his room was stacked."

"Did you ever help stack it?"

"I guess I did—a little."

"Did you go down town with him at the time to which I refer?"

"As long as he told you all about it I'll have to own up."

"And have you tried to get Price into trouble with Mr. McCann or any other teachers?"

"He gets himself into trouble. Nobody has to get him in. I wish he never had come to the Tait School."

"Don't you enjoy his company?"

"I do not," snapped the boy.

"Let me tell you then for your own comfort that it is quite likely you will not be compelled to endure it much longer."

CHAPTER XX

ATTACKED

FOR a moment both boys stared blankly into the face of the teacher. Startled as Dick was by the quietly spoken words of Dr. Hull he nevertheless was speedily aware that the cheeks of his classmate were almost ghastly in their whiteness.

The statement meant much, coming as it did from Dr. Hull whose word throughout the school was implicitly trusted.

"One of you," continued the Doctor, "has been lying to me. I trust I do not expect too much or at least the impossible from my boys, but a boy who will lie gives me little hope. I can forgive almost anything else. And as I said one of you has been lying to me."

The face of Ayers now was almost distorted. Half-crying and half-screaming, he said, "I guess he'll find out that it won't do for him to blab on me. The fellows haven't any use for a tell-tale."

Turning to Dick, Dr. Hull said quietly, "Price, have you told any of the teachers about Ayers?"

"No, sir," replied Dick.

"You certainly have never said a word to me. I think I speak within bounds when I say that I accept your statement implicitly."

"How did you find out then?" interrupted Ayers.

"It doesn't make any difference to you," said the headmaster sternly, "how I found out. It is enough that I know."

"Dr. Hull," said Dick quickly, "I don't blame Ayers for suspecting me. I didn't do it and I think in his heart he knows that I wouldn't tell on him, but I know how he feels when you tell him that he may be sent home. I guess he said more than he meant to say."

"Is that true?" inquired the teacher quietly as he glanced again at Ayers.

"No, sir, it isn't true!" said Ayers. "I know Price told and some of the things he says look as if they were true. Everybody is against me."

"Look here, Ayers," said the Doctor more sternly, "you are in no frame of mind to talk just now. Go to your room."

"But Doctor—" protested Ayers.

"Go to your room!" said the Doctor sternly.

Ayers lifted his left arm to his face and slowly departed from the room.

"Now, Price," said the teacher, turning again

to Dick, "I do not think I need say anything more. You have had your lesson. And I hope you will avoid even the appearance of evil. I am convinced that you are not guilty of the charges made against you and I shall tell Mr. McCann that he was mistaken in all that he suspected except your leaving the building after ten o'clock. For that you have been on the limits now long enough to pay the penalty. You may go."

It was in Dick's mind to thank the Doctor, but he was quickly aware that the teacher was in no mood at the time to receive even his words of appreciation.

Elated over the outcome and confident now that his troubles were ended, Dick ran swiftly through the corridor and up the stairway, bounding into his own room in a manner that caused Jack to rise from the chair in which he was seated and stare blankly at his roommate.

"It's all off! It's all off!" shouted Dick gleefully.

"What's off?"

"The limits."

"Do you mean you're free again?"

"Yes, sir, that's exactly what I mean. The Doctor has told me that I have been punished enough for stealing out of the building and now I am free again."

"That's great. That's fine," responded Jack enthusiastically. "What made him do it?"

"He said he had found out that what I told him was true. But he told Ayers," continued Dick, "that he might have to send him home. He didn't say directly that little Willie had been lying to him, but he meant it."

"Is he going to send Ayers home?" inquired Jack blankly.

"I don't know. He said he might have to send him. He says he can stand anything from a boy except a lie. He told Ayers to go straight to his room and I have a notion that it won't be long before Dr. Hull will follow him."

"I guess Ayers might as well be packing his trunk. From what I have heard I don't think the Doctor ever says as much as that to any fellow unless it's about time for him to say good-by to the Tait School."

The two boys, elated over the relief which had come to Dick, talked excitedly over their plans for the coming days.

It was possible now for Dick to resume his playing on the junior eleven. Then too there were the meetings of the WOES and the steadily increasing interest which had been manifested by all the boys who were members of the Society.

There was still a half-hour before the evening

meal and the boys were about to depart from their room when the door suddenly was opened and Humphrey entered.

It was instantly manifest that he was in a towering rage. Indeed, his face was almost distorted with anger and as he closed the door behind him he slipped the bolt at the same time.

Both boys were frightened by the threatening attitude of their unwelcome visitor.

"What's this I hear about you?" demanded Humphrey savagely as he approached Dick.

"How do I know?" inquired the lad.

"You have been blabbing. You've been running to Dr. Hull with your tell-tale stories about Ayers."

"Who says I have?"

"That doesn't make any difference. It's enough to know that you have been a tell-tale."

"But I haven't."

"Don't lie to me," said Humphrey, his voice becoming lower as he spoke. "I have come down to have it out with you. Will you promise me that you'll go straight to Dr. Hull and own up that you lied when you said that Ayers got you into trouble?"

"No. I won't," answered Dick quietly. He was determined and although he gazed in apparent fearlessness at the boy before him still Jack

was able to see that his roommate was really in distress. Never before had either of them seen Humphrey so angry. And he was a powerful boy, much stronger than either of the younger lads.

"If you don't promise me," said Humphrey, moving nearer Dick as he spoke, "then I shall make you."

"But it isn't true," protested Dick. "I didn't tell."

"That sounds all right when you say it to the Doctor, but you can't fool me. I told you to leave Ayers alone and you haven't done it. Now that you have got him into trouble you have got me to deal with as well as him. Will you promise me?"

"No. I won't."

"Then I shall make you."

Leaping forward the bully seized Dick who made slight resistance and lifting him bodily threw him upon the bed while he leaned over him, one fist drawn back and his eyes close to those of the helpless boy.

"Will you promise?" again he said in a low voice.

"No, I won't," said Dick.

"Then take that!" Humphrey, as he spoke, struck Dick savagely in the face.

"Now will you promise?" he demanded.

"No, I won't," repeated Dick.

Again Humphrey struck the helpless boy. So excited was he, however that he failed to notice that Jack had quietly crept around the room and hastily turned the key in the lock of the door. Noiselessly he opened the door and still his action was not observed by Humphrey who was entirely engrossed in his purpose of making Dick promise to report to Doctor Hull that he had spoken falsely concerning Ayers.

Running swiftly Jack made his way to several rooms occupied by the WOES. Fortunately he found five, all of whom in response to his frantic appeal ran swiftly with him as he sped toward his room. To their consternation they discovered that the door was locked and it was impossible for them to enter.

Jack listened a moment intently for he was seriously alarmed now for his roommate. The sounds which he faintly heard were not consoling and greatly excited he turned to his companions and said, "We've got to break the door in. We've got to get in there to help Dick. There's no knowing what that crazy Humphrey will do to him."

"Wait a minute. Wait a minute," called Long as Jack in his excitement drew back to throw him-

self forcefully against the door. "You wait a minute here and I'll be back."

Instantly running down the stairway Long left his companions but not more than two minutes had elapsed before he returned.

"Step back, fellows," he called sharply.

As the boys obeyed his directions, Long at once thrust the key which he had obtained into the keyhole and turned the lock.

Quickly the door was opened and together the six excited boys burst into the room.

CHAPTER XXI

THE WOES ACT

FOR a moment they all stood still as they saw what their friend was suffering at the hands of the bully. Again and again the powerful boy had struck Dick demanding each time that he should promise that he would go to the headmaster and withdraw his charges against Ayers.

The continued refusal of the younger boy had increased the anger of Humphrey until the latter was wellnigh beside himself in his rage.

A shrill cry of anger arose from the six boys as soon as they discovered the predicament of their friend. Moved by a common impulse they all threw themselves upon the bully, some throwing their arms about his neck, while others seized him by his feet. In a moment Humphrey was thrown to the floor and as he fell he struck one of the chairs which crashed against Jack's desk.

For a moment the angry boys were startled by the commotion that it had caused and taking advantage of the fact Humphrey was able to tear

himself loose from the grasp of his enemies and flee ingloriously into the corridor.

As he passed out of the door, however, he was halted by Mr. McCann. The teacher had been aroused by the disturbance in the room of Dick and Jack and in his most noiseless fashion had sped to the place to discover the cause.

"Stop, young gentlemen," he called. "Every one of you must halt. What is the meaning of all this disturbance? Why is it that I find again disorder traceable to this room?"

"Look at that and you'll see," said Jack who now became the spokesman for the party. As he spoke he pointed to the face of his roommate which presented a sight far from attractive. The blows which the bully had rained upon his younger opponent had left Dick in a sorry plight.

Apparently, however, Mr. McCann was unmoved by the sight, except that his anger toward Dick was again aroused.

"Ah," he said in his smoothest tones, "you have been fighting again, I fancy."

"No, Mr. McCann," said Dick who spoke with difficulty. "I haven't been fighting."

"Do not dispute me," said Mr. McCann. "Your face bears witness to your disorderly conduct.

"But I haven't been fighting," protested Dick.

"Pray, tell me then what has happened to your face?"

"I stepped on it," said Dick thickly.

"That is a physical impossibility," said Mr. McCann seriously. "I do not intend to remain here and receive your insulting remarks any longer. I shall ask you to report to Dr. Hull immediately after supper to-night, and meanwhile I shall inform him of the distressing conditions which I discovered in your room and how they were preceded by sounds of revelry and confusion that were strictly contrary to the rules of the Tait School."

"You're all wrong," said Jack angrily, taking the part of his friend. "Dick hadn't been fighting at all. You ask Humphrey."

But Humphrey had already departed. When he discovered that Mr. McCann was engaged in what promised to be a somewhat exciting conversation with Dick he had made the most of the opportunity and slipped away from the company.

"Why should I ask Humphrey," demanded Mr. McCann, "when I have the evidence of the disturbance directly in front of me?"

"Mr. McCann," said Jack still more sharply, "do you suppose Dick pounded his own face? If he was fighting he must have been fighting with somebody and you know as well as we boys do

who that is. If you make Dick report to Dr. Hull then we boys will go too and tell him exactly what the trouble was and that you would not listen to anything we could say to explain. You wouldn't even give us a chance."

"I have said all that I care to," said Mr. McCann. "I shall now go back to my rooms and meanwhile I shall expect that peace will prevail and the quiet of the corridor will not be disturbed by any of you disorderly boys."

As soon as the teacher was gone the half-dozen boys seated themselves in the chairs or on the floor and angrily began to discuss what they termed the injustice of Gumshoe.

"It's time for us to act anyway," suggested Long. "If the WOES are good for anything they have got to show it right now. How will it do for us to go up to Humphrey's room and show him that we're in earnest?"

"I'll tell you what to do," said Jack. "You follow me."

Quietly departing from the room, Jack led the way and did not stop until he halted in front of the door of Humphrey's room. Then arranging his followers in order he said, "Now we'll groan and call together."

"Woe! Woe! Woe!" groaned the six boys in unison. "What is Humphrey going to get for

his? Woe! Woe! Woe! What is coming to his little sneaking roommate? Woe! Woe! Woe!"

At that moment however, the door in front of them was opened and the face of Ayers peered forth.

"Where's Hump?" demanded Jack.

"I don't know. He isn't here," replied Ayers.

"Then I think we'll accept your invitation, Willie, and come in to visit you."

"No, you won't accept my invitation," snapped Ayers. As he spoke he attempted to close the door, but Jack quickly thrust his foot between the door and the sill and Ayers was unable to accomplish his purpose.

"We're coming in to visit you, little Willie," said Jack in a low voice.

"If you try to get into this room I'll yell for Gumshoe."

"Oh, no you won't," declared Long, peering sharply into the face of Ayers as he spoke. "You're going to be very quiet for if you don't you're going to get all that is coming to you."

The threats of his visitors overawed the frightened boy and without any further protests the visitors entered and locked the door behind them.

"Do you see what has happened to Dick?" in-

quired Jack as he pointed to the swollen face of his roommate.

"I guess he didn't get any more than he deserved," whined Ayers.

"That's your opinion, is it?"

"Yes, sir, it is. And you know what will happen if you don't stop picking on me and if you try anything more now you'll get in worse trouble. Humphrey won't stand your abusing me."

"And we shan't stand Hump abusing Dick or any of the WOES," retorted Long sharply. "Now then are you ready to take the same dose that Hump gave Dick?"

"Go away! Go away! Every one of you go away!" screamed Ayers. "If you don't leave this room right away I will call Pussyfoot. It doesn't make any difference what happens."

Ayers was standing in front of his desk, a heavy ruler grasped in his right hand and his excitement showing in the paleness which had spread over his face.

Before any of his visitors were able to act, however, the key in the door was turned and Humphrey entered. For a moment he stared blankly at the intruders and then instantly comprehending the purpose of the visit, said sharply, "I think you boys have had about all you want

to-day. If you haven't I'm going to give you the rest of it. Now then that door is open," he added as he opened the door, "and I'll give you just a half-minute to get out of this room. Every one of you go!"

"There comes Gumshoe," whispered Jack. Without waiting to confirm his statement the six boys noiselessly fled from the room.

As soon as they were gone the door of the room was slammed to by Humphrey and the boys were unable to return.

"Gumshoe isn't anywhere in the corridor," said Long in a low voice. "Hump put one over on us then."

"Never mind, fellows," said Jack. "There's another good time coming and we'll have to wait for it, but Watch Out Everybody. There goes the bell for supper and we'll have to wait anyhow before we do anything more."

When the evening meal was ended, in accordance with the directions of Mr. McCann Dick obediently sought once more the office of Dr. Hull.

Now that the excitement had passed and his face still plainly indicated the punishment which Humphrey had visited upon him, Dick was decidedly ill at ease. It would be difficult for him to explain fully just what had occurred. Nor was he entirely guiltless of the charge Mr. McCann

had made. It was true that he had been attacked and had not begun the dispute, but it was equally true that to the best of his ability he had fought back and that all his efforts to defend himself had not been in vain.

Accordingly when Dick entered the office and discovered that Dr. Hull was not there, his first impulse was to depart hastily and if any further questions were asked, to explain that he had reported as he had been bidden at the office, but that he had not found the Doctor there.

His purpose, however, was speedily changed when at that moment the door on the opposite side of the room was opened and the head of the Hull House entered his office.

CHAPTER XXII

AYERS A WOE

"GOOD evening, Price," said the Doctor quietly as he entered and seated himself before his desk.

"Good evening, Doctor," replied Dick. "I seem to be visiting you quite often," he added in a low voice.

"If you come with the right purpose I shall always be glad to see you," the teacher said kindly. "What brings you here this evening?"

"Mr. McCann told me to report to you."

A slight frown appeared on the Doctor's face before he spoke, "What new trouble is it now, my boy?"

"He claims that I was fighting with Humphrey."

"Where?"

"In my room."

"And is it true? Your face certainly shows some marks of a conflict."

"I wasn't fighting," said Dick. "Unless you call trying to defend myself fighting."

"And that is what you were doing?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you want to tell me how it came to pass?"

"Yes, sir. One of the boys that the fellows think has made trouble—"

"Was it Ayers?"

"I don't want to tell you his name. But Hump —I mean one of the older boys took the part of this fellow and he came to my room and told me he was going to punish me."

"And he did?"

"I'm afraid he did—some."

"And you tried to defend yourself?"

"Yes, sir."

"How did Mr. McCann know about it?"

"Why just as we opened the door of my room one of the fellows was pushed out into the hall and he fell against Mr. McCann. I happened to be there—"

"I have no doubt as to that," said the Doctor dryly. "You seem to be *semper ubique.*"

"I don't know what that means."

"Then I'm afraid you're not working on your Latin lessons as hard as you ought. I shan't tell you what it means, though; I want you to find out for yourself. Did you push this fellow who fell against Mr. McCann? Were you fighting Humphrey as Mr. McCann claims?"

"I have told you already, Doctor," said Dick impulsively. "This fellow had me on the bed and was pounding my face. If you call that fighting, then I suppose I'm guilty."

"Price," said the Doctor after another pause, "why is it that you're in all the scrapes or pranks?"

"I don't know. I'm not in them because I want to be. That time when I went out of the House after hours is the only time that I have really been guilty."

"I believe you, Price," said the Doctor. "I think Mr. McCann perhaps has made a mistake and yet I must uphold him or the discipline of the school will suffer. I fancy you can see that."

"I don't see," said Dick warmly. "I cannot understand why if a fellow has a charge made against him that isn't true, it doesn't hurt the discipline of the school just as much to punish him when he is innocent as it does to stand by the teacher every time. Mr. McCann has a grudge against me and if there is anything that goes wrong he always says I'm the one that starts it."

Dr. Hull smiled as he said not unkindly, "You do seem to be having a hard time, Price. I believe you when you tell me that you are trying to keep out of these things. The only way for

you to do is to keep *away* from them. Now, if you were in my place and you had a boy in your school whose word was not reliable what would you do with him?"

"Do you mean me, Doctor?" inquired Dick aghast.

"Haven't I just told you that I thought you meant to do right? Have I ever accused you of lying?"

"No, sir."

"Then of course I have no reference to you."

"I suppose you're talking about Ayers."

"Very well. We'll 'suppose' that I'm talking about Ayers. From what you know about him would you advise me to send him home?"

"No, sir," responded Dick promptly.

"Why not?"

"Because I think he ought to have another show. The only thing I would do," suggested Dick, "would be to have him room with some other fellow."

"Then you do not think Humphrey's influence on him is good?"

"I don't like Humphrey."

"I confess I'm not surprised," said the Doctor. "He is a good deal of a bully. I shall keep in mind what you have said though. I should like to have you explain to me a little more fully

your reasons for believing that it would be wise to give Ayers another trial."

"Why, he's only a kid, Doctor," said Dick glibly. "If he got away from—from—the fellow he is rooming with maybe he would be different."

"How would you like to room with him?"

"I shouldn't like to. I don't want to. Why, Jack and I have been friends ever since we were four years old. He has lived right next door to me and he's just like one of my brothers."

"Don't be alarmed," said the Doctor with a smile. "I'm not planning to change your room or roommate. I confess my experience has not made me very hopeful of improvement in a boy who has been caught in a lie. There are many things which I can forgive in a boy, but lying is not one of them. Meanwhile, Price, I want you to be unusually careful and do not arouse even a suspicion on the part of Mr. McCann that you are in mischief. I'm afraid that I shall be compelled to take sterner measures if you are sent to me again."

"But, Doctor—" protested Dick as he arose, "if I'm sent to you when I am not guilty—"

"Never mind, lad, never mind," laughed the Doctor. "I'm not going to get into any argument with you."

Dick departed from the office and at once sought

his own room. There he found the four other charter members of the WOES.

"How did you get along?" inquired Long.

"All right," replied Dick gleefully. "I'm telling you that Dr. Hull is the greatest man that ever wore shoes."

"What makes you think so?" laughed Sam Green.

"Because he understands a fellow and he understands Gumshoe too. Gumshoe is a good teacher, but he knows his books and he doesn't know anything about boys."

"Did the Doctor say that?" inquired Jack.

"No, he didn't have to."

"I'm glad you came, Dick," said Long. "We were just talking about taking little Willie Ayers into the WOES."

"What?" demanded Dick in astonishment.

"Yes, sir, that's just what we're talking about. We think if he joins the WOES we can look after him and he'll behave himself."

"Let me see," said Dick in a low voice, his eyes twinkling as he spoke, "Ayers will have to be initiated, won't he?"

"You're right he will," laughed Sam.

"Will he be told all the secrets?" inquired Dick.

"Oh, no, we won't tell him any more than we want to."

"But does he want to join?"

"It doesn't make any difference whether he 'wants' to or not," said Jack. "He's going to be initiated just the same."

"Oh, yes, I see," responded Dick demurely. "When is this initiation to take place?"

"Just as soon as we can arrange it. Probably to-morrow," replied Long.

"What time?"

"To-morrow after the study-hour."

"Where are you going to hold it?"

"We were just talking about that when you came in. I don't think we can have it in the attic of the Hull House. There might be too much of a disturbance and if Gumshoe heard it why he would send you to see Dr. Hull again."

"No, we can't have it here," said Dick positively, "but what I don't understand is how you're going to get Ayers to go in anyway."

"You leave that to me," said Jack. "There's an old barn about a half-mile out of the village over toward Stone Hill. Why wouldn't that be a good place for our meeting to-morrow afternoon?"

"Fine!" exclaimed Dick enthusiastically. "I'm not on the limits any longer and so I'll be able to attend the meeting."

"I guess we'll all try to be present," laughed

Sam. "Now then, Chief Calamity Howler," he added as he turned to Long, "if you want us to help invite Ayers to come out there you'll let us know."

"You'll know all right," said Long, "but I guess we'll be able to handle it without you. What I want of every fellow here except Jack is to be out there in the old barn to-morrow afternoon at half-past four sharp. Don't one of you dare be late."

"We'll be on time, you trust us for that," said Sam. "Anything you want us to bring with us?"

"Yes, you might bring a tallow candle and two saucers."

"What for?" laughed Dick.

"That's one of the secrets which no WOE is ever going to tell," said Long, shaking his head solemnly as he spoke.

Promptly at the appointed hour eight members of the WOES in groups of two made their way to the old deserted barn near the foot of Stone Hill.

When Dick entered the ramshackle building he found five of the boys already there. Two others were yet to come, besides the Chief Calamity Howler and Jack, who were to conduct the boy that was to be initiated to the meeting place.

In whispers the boys conversed until a half-

hour had elapsed and then Dick said, "I'm almost afraid they couldn't work it, fellows. Ayers is smart enough, whatever else he is, and I don't believe Jack was able to get him to come."

"He'll come all right," declared Sam confidently. "I guess they're coming now," he added hastily as he pointed through an open space in the side of the barn.

Rushing to the place the excited WOES discovered that Sam had spoken truly. Not far down the road they perceived three boys walking toward the barn. In the center was Ayers, while Jack was on his right side and Charlie Long on his left.

CHAPTER XXIII

A SPECIAL INITIATION

INSTANTLY the excitement among the waiting boys became intense.

"I didn't believe they would ever get Billy Ayers to come with them unless we brought him," said Dick.

"You don't know how popular we are," laughed Green. "Every fellow in the school wants to know what our badges stand for and when I have sung to them our song they don't believe what I say."

"Look yonder," said Dick quickly, pointing toward the approaching boys as he spoke. "Little Willie doesn't seem to be quite as enthusiastic as he was."

The three approaching boys had stopped and it was manifest that Ayers was protesting against a further advance. However, his protests either were overruled or he was satisfied with the explanations his companions gave him for he resumed his walk although each boy still retained his place by his side.

"It's time for us to get in our uniforms," suggested Green.

"'Uniforms' is good," retorted Dick, as he donned his cloak and hat and prepared to adjust his mask to his face. "This isn't a uniform, it's a regalia."

"All right then, call it what you want to, as long as you put it on," laughed Green. "We must be ready to welcome little Willie."

"We'll welcome him all right," said Dick grimly. "We'll initiate him too. I guess he'll remember his experience with the WOES for some time."

"Hush! Keep quiet!" warned Green as his companions crowded about him and peered out through the opening at the three boys who now were not more than twenty yards away.

"Take your positions," suggested Dick.

In accordance with his words the boys took the positions which had been assigned them and formed a semicircle in the midst of which Ayers and his companions would be thrust as soon as they entered the barn. It then was the plan of the WOES to join the extremities of the semicircle and thus form a complete circle about the proposed new member.

"This is great," whispered Sam Green in his

excitement. "I think we'll have a fine old time with little Willie."

At that moment Jack and Long, firmly grasping Ayers by his arms, entered the barn.

Their coming was a signal for a prolonged groan from the assembled boys.

"WOE! WOE! WOE!" they groaned together.

The cry was repeated several times as the extremities of the line drew together and Ayers was left standing alone in the midst of the assembly.

"You let me out of this!" shouted the newcomer. "I'm not going to stay here! You made me come, or I wouldn't be here. You let me out of here I say! You'll be sorry if you don't."

"WOE! WOE! WOE!" chanted the boys as they joined hands and the circle began to revolve about the boy who now stood in the center.

"I'm not going to stay here!" shouted Ayers in his shrillest tones. "I guess you'll be sorry if you don't let me go."

"WOE! WOE! WOE!" repeated the assembly.

Evidently alarmed, Ayers dashed against one part of the ring, but he was caught by the outstretched and united arms of the boys and again was thrown back into the center.

"You stop that! You let me out!" shrieked Ayers. "I'm not going to stay here. You haven't any right to keep me. I'll tell Humphrey about you."

Again the weird and dancing figures cried, "WOE! WOE! WOE!" But no other response was made to the appeal of the frantic boy.

Several times Ayers desperately attempted to force his way through the line, but every effort was unavailing. Each time he was thrown back by the arms of the boys, whose hands were still clasped and who were slowly revolving about the unwilling visitor.

Their meaningless chant of "WOE! WOE! WOE!" was steadily maintained and as it was impossible to distinguish one boy from another, the united cry seemed to Ayers, who was badly frightened, to come from every side of him at once.

In spite of his appeals to be freed he was still compelled to remain. At last when he ceased voicing his threats, Charlie Long, who now had donned his garb as Chief Calamity Howler, stepped within the circle and stopping in front of Ayers, said to him in a deep and hollow voice, "Why art thou here?"

"Because you wouldn't let me go," whined Ayers.

"And dost thou desire to become a member of

the Ancient and Venerable Order of WOES?''

''No, sir, I don't,'' snapped Ayers. ''You let me out of here. I guess you'll be sorry if you don't.''

''Shall the petitioner be admitted to the secrets of this mysterious and mighty order?'' demanded the Chief Howler, turning to his companions as he spoke.

''Admit him to the first stage,'' replied one of the assembly in his deepest tones.

''I don't want any 'stage,' '' shouted Ayers. ''You let me out of this.''

''And shall the culprit now be presented for condign punishment or shall he be permitted to flee as he requests?'' demanded Long.

The rays of the afternoon sun entering the barn through the knot holes and open spaces made the motes visible as they danced in the sunlight. It plainly had been long since the barn had been used and the dust of years had settled upon it. A part of the roof was gone and one or two broken and rusted farm implements were standing in one corner. Even the stalls in which the horses had been kept years before had been broken down and there was a weird and forlorn appearance about the entire place.

The air of dilapidation that was manifest about the entire building seemed to lend an additional

impression of weirdness to the strangely-clad, dancing figures in the midst of which Ayers now found himself.

Following Ayers' last threat, at a signal from the Chief Calamity Howler, the entire ring halted, every boy standing silent and motionless in his place.

"And wherefore seekest thou to join this mysterious band?" demanded Long, once more standing in front of Ayers.

"I don't want to join your old band!" cried Ayers. "You let me go! You let me go, I say." As he spoke his voice arose almost to a shriek and for a moment Dick was tempted to interfere in his behalf.

The momentary impulse, however, was thrust aside when Ayers, apparently losing control of himself, flew viciously at Jack in his effort to push past him. Biting, striking, kicking, screaming, the boy appeared almost to be beside himself. His efforts, however, were still in vain and he was once more compelled to take his place in the midst of the circle.

"What's all this?"

Every boy turned abruptly as the unexpected demand was heard and saw Humphrey standing in the doorway.

The door had been closed from within, but

through one of the many openings Humphrey had made his way and in order to see more distinctly and at the same time to make his departure more easy in case it became necessary he had opened the door.

"That's right, Hump!" screamed Ayers. "Good for you! I told these fellows you'd come. Help me! Help me!"

At the same moment the lad succeeded in forcing his way past Dick, who for the moment had forgotten the necessity of keeping Ayers in his place. He was startled by the gruff hail which had been heard directly behind him.

Ayers, however, had not stopped by the side of Humphrey, but sped through the open doorway and fled into the road and ran at his utmost speed back toward the school.

"What have you boys been doing with that little fellow again?" demanded Humphrey. "Why don't you take somebody of your own size? What makes you pick on him? I know who you are in spite of your out-landish clothes. I don't know whether to pitch into you and give every one of you what he deserves, or to let Dr. Hull hear about your catching a little fellow like Ayers out here in this barn and tormenting him."

"WOE! WOE! WOE," shouted the boys together.

"You can't scare me," said Humphrey in a loud voice. "I can whip the whole crowd."

"WOE! WOE! WOE!" again groaned the boys.

Meanwhile the circle had swung slightly nearer the front of the barn and to the left of Humphrey. Before he was fully aware of what was taking place at a given signal the line had abruptly opened and in a moment the bully was inside the circle.

Laughing loudly though it was plain that he was not entirely without fear he started to break his way through the line.

Knocking the conical hat from the head of the boy before him, who proved to be Dick, he said, "You don't seem to have had enough."

Before he could strike, however, the circle had thrown him back and before he could regain his balance he was pushed back and forth and thrown in different directions.

At last losing his balance Humphrey fell to the floor and in a moment the excited boys threw themselves upon him.

CHAPTER XXIV

AN UNFORTUNATE ENDING

HUMPHREY'S hands were securely bound behind his back and then in spite of his contortions and kicks he was lifted once more to his feet. He was still angry and his chagrin at being taken as he was by the younger boys increased his rage.

However, discretion for a moment at least returned, and angrily backing away from his tormentors he said in a loud voice, "What do you boys mean anyway? What do you want? I heard Ayers down here and he looked and acted as if he had been sent through a sausage-grinder, so I came up to find out what it's all about."

"Well, you're finding out, aren't you?" inquired Long who was still dressed in his strange garb.

"If I am, some of you have learned a thing or two too as well as I. Now, then, what is it you want? What do you intend to do?"

"WOE! WOE! WOE!" groaned the boys in a prolonged cry.

"'WOE! WOE! WOE!'" mimicked Humphrey.

"Woe is come upon you," groaned Long. "W,—O,—E,'s are about to take vengeance for all that they have suffered at the hands of the worst bully the Tait School ever knew. They will do this, Humphrey, unless—unless you promise solemnly here and now that you will never lay hands on any of us again."

"I shan't promise anything," retorted Humphrey sharply. "I'll do as I please and I guess that some of you will find out that what pleases me doesn't always please you."

"We'll give you one more chance," said Long in still deeper tones.

"I don't want it."

"Very well, then we shall proceed."

Instantly Humphrey was yanked first in one direction and then in another and as his hands still were tied he was unable in any way to defend himself.

Unknown to any of the boys in the old barn, in one corner of the room which they now were occupying, was a broken pitch fork only one tine of which was left and that was somewhat rusty.

In the confusion that followed the renewed attack upon the bully, this broken pitch fork was

pushed from its place, although not one of the WOES gave it any heed.

Once more as Humphrey was being pushed about the room he suddenly lost his balance and fell to the floor.

As he fell his shoulder struck the upturned fork and promptly a loud cry escaped Humphrey's lips.

Instantly silence fell over the assembly as it was seen that Humphrey really was hurt. The broken fork now was discovered and thrown hastily to one side. Quickly Humphrey's jacket was removed and when it was discovered that his shoulder was covered with blood, several of the boys glanced at one another with fear manifest in the expression of their faces.

Humphrey was groaning loudly and there was no disguising the fact that he was suffering intensely.

"Have we killed him?" said Sam Green aghast.

A groan from Humphrey did not tend to soothe the feelings of the frightened boys.

"I know a little what to do, but somebody will have to go for help, I'm afraid," said Long as he tore away Humphrey's shirt and examined the wound which still was bleeding freely. "I guess it's a good thing it's bleeding," he said. "That old pitch fork-tine was rusty, so if the wound

bleeds it will throw out any poison that might have been in the iron-rust."

The wound it was discovered was not a small hole in the flesh, but was a somewhat jagged tear. Evidently the fork after it had entered the flesh had been pressed down by the weight of the falling boys and it had made a wound that was at least an inch and a half in length.

Humphrey was groaning even more loudly than before. His face had become ghastly in its paleness and the alarm of the WOES consequently increased.

"I'll try to bind this up," suggested Long. "I think I can help stop the flow of blood anyway. But some fellow has got to go for a doctor."

"I'll go," suggested Dick, quickly casting aside the remainder of his regalia.

"Go ahead then," said Long, "and don't waste any time either."

Dick instantly sped from the barn and ran swiftly into the roadway. As has been said the village was not more than a half-mile distant, but the fear in Dick's heart that Humphrey had been seriously hurt made the distance seem much greater to the anxious boy.

What the result would be for Humphrey and what would be done with the boys who, in a measure at least, had brought the trouble upon him were

thoughts that were uppermost in the mind of Dick as he ran swiftly toward the little village.

He had gone only about half the distance when he stopped abruptly as before him he saw Dr. Hull and Mr. McCann approaching.

His first thought was that they had heard of the accident, and were coming to investigate. A second thought, however, convinced him that this conjecture was not correct. It was impossible for the headmaster to have heard of the mishap which had occurred only a very few minutes before.

Beginning to run again, Dick breathlessly called to the two teachers as he drew near, "Dr. Hull, there's been an accident."

"Where?" inquired the headmaster quickly.

"In the old barn yonder," answered Dick, as he pointed toward the ruined structure.

"Who's hurt?"

"Humphrey."

"How did it occur?" inquired the Doctor, glancing keenly into the face of Dick as he spoke.

"Why some of us boys were there," said Dick, "and we were dressed up in our costumes, when Humphrey came in and I guess he tried to break up the meeting. At all events the first thing we knew he was in the middle of the circle and there was a good deal of a disturbance. Humphrey slipped and fell and an old broken pitch fork that

hadn't been seen by any of us pricked him in the shoulder."

"Is that all?" inquired the Doctor.

"I'm afraid it tore quite a large hole."

"Where are you going?"

"I had started for the doctor's."

"Keep right on and don't lose any time," said the Doctor sharply. "Bring him back with you."

Throughout this conversation the teachers had been walking steadily toward the building and Dick unconsciously had followed them.

At the Doctor's bidding, however, he turned quickly, and, once more at the speed at which he had been running, now raced toward the village.

It was plain to the troubled boy that Dr. Hull was not merely alarmed, but angry at the story told him.

Dick's heart was heavy for now he was somehow convinced that there was serious trouble ahead. And Dr. Hull had been such a good friend. He had understood him thoroughly, Dick believed. And now after all his kindness, for him once more to be in disgrace and this time for something that might be serious, increased the fears of the running boy.

However, he had not slackened the pace at which he was running and in a brief time arrived at the office of Dr. Lord.

Bursting into the waiting room he called loudly, "Is Dr. Lord here?"

"What's the trouble? What is wanted?" inquired the doctor as he came out of his inner office.

"One of the boys has been hurt."

"Where is he?"

"In the old barn up near the foot of Stone Hill."

"What happened?"

"He fell on a pitch fork."

"Where was he hurt?"

"In his shoulder."

"Is he bleeding freely?"

"Yes, sir."

"How far did the tine enter the flesh?"

"I don't know," said Dick. "I don't think very far. It seemed to tear a hole."

Throughout his questioning Dr. Lord was busily selecting bandages and instruments and as soon as he had gathered these together he said, "Come with me, my lad."

The doctor's automobile was waiting in front of his door and in this both took their seats.

Quickly the car was racing at high speed through the village streets and when they turned into the road that led up toward Stone Hill the machine was moving at the rate of forty miles an hour.

It was impossible to drive the car into the field and calling to Dick to follow him the doctor stopped by the roadside and they both ran toward the barn.

Dr. Hull and Mr. McCann had arrived only a brief time before the coming of the physician. The teachers already had carefully examined the wound and praised Long for his skill in the first aid to the injured.

"Ah, here's the doctor," said Mr. McCann, rising from the place where he had been kneeling beside Humphrey. "We must all step back and give him room."

Quietly the doctor began his investigation, while a silence deep and tense rested over the assembly. The eyes of all the boys were turned toward the physician and the pale face of Humphrey as well as his blood-stained clothing now increased the fear for all.

"I want two of the coolest boys here to help me," said the doctor as he arose for a moment.

"Jack and Long are the fellows you want," suggested Dick.

"I don't care who they are, but I want them right away to help me. We must get this boy back to the village and I think he will have to be carried to my automobile. I have staunched the

flow of blood as well as I can here, but I want him to go to my office."

"Is he hurt very much?" inquired Dick anxiously.

Ignoring the question Dr. Lord ordered the two boys who had been selected for the task to lift Humphrey and carry him to the roadside.

Jack and Long placed their hands together in such a manner as to provide a seat for the wounded boy, and then, after he had placed an arm around the neck of each of his helpers, they started with their burden toward the waiting car.

CHAPTER XXV

A TIME OF ANXIETY

BOTH Jack and Long were aware how ghastly was the face of the boy they were carrying, and consequently their own sympathy was deeply stirred. Humphrey's groans too were of a character to show that apparently he was suffering great pain. Then the presence of the teachers, for both Dr. Hull and Mr. McCann had followed the physician, also added to their feeling of nervousness.

As soon as Humphrey was seated in the automobile, Dr. Lord, bidding the boy lean against him, started quickly for the village. It had been agreed that he should take him to the school infirmary, to which place both teachers also promised to come at once.

Apparently of its own accord the meeting of the WOES dispersed. Costumes long since had been laid aside and the frightened boys were all ready to return to the school.

At the suggestion of Long, however, they did not walk back in a body. It was agreed also that

Dick and Long should go to the infirmary to inquire what the doctor's judgment concerning Humphrey was and also to offer such help as might be needed.

It was a subdued and straggling group of boys that entered the Hull House a half-hour afterward. Assembled in Jack's room they talked over the exciting experiences of the afternoon.

"It wasn't any one's fault that Humphrey got hurt," declared Jack loudly. "He just slipped and fell."

"No one knew the pitch fork was there anyway," suggested Sam Green.

"I don't see as that makes much difference," said another. "The main fact is that the WOES were all there in the barn and were putting Billy Ayers and Hump through their best paces."

"Has anybody seen Ayers?" spoke up Sam Green quickly.

As no one had seen him Sam at once left the room to ascertain if Ayers was in the building. In a brief time he returned with the word that he had been unable to find Ayers and that no word had come from him.

"I'm afraid we're in for it," said Sam glumly as he joined his friends. "Ayers will blab and the Doctor will have the whole story in no time."

"That's right," said Jack. "Humphrey's acci-

dent of itself wouldn't be likely to do us any good. I wish Dick and Long would come. I want to find out how much Hump is hurt."

It was immediately after supper when Dick and Long returned. The waiting boys greeted them eagerly and unitedly demanded the verdict of Dr. Lord.

"Well, fellows," said Dick, "Dr. Lord says he can't tell yet, but he doesn't think that Humphrey is badly hurt. He's going to keep him in bed two or three days so that he will be quiet and the wound can be watched. The doctor says that unless there is some infection he doesn't believe that Humphrey is going to have a hard time."

"That's good," exclaimed Jack, greatly relieved by the word.

Not only in the Hull House, but throughout the entire Tait School the story of Humphrey's "accident" spread like wild-fire. It soon was the leading topic of conversation among the boys. That night soon after supper, Redhead Price and Jack's older brother came to the Hull House and sought out their younger brothers.

"Now what does all this mean?" demanded Redhead when the four were in the room of Jack and Dick. "You kids seem to have the way all greased for you to get into trouble."

"How about you, Redhead?" demanded Dick

sharply. "It seems to me I've heard once in a while about some scrapes you had when you first came to the Tait School."

"Quite likely," said Redhead demurely. "That has nothing whatever to do with this case. I want you two kids to tell us straight just what you were doing."

"Well," began Dick slowly. "We have a society you know. We call it the WOES."

"Good name," laughed Stone. "Is it 'woe' for the fellows that join or for the boys that are outside?"

"Some times one, some times the other," spoke up Jack. "This time I guess every one gets a dose of it. Certainly Hump did."

"Well the way of it was this," broke in Dick. "Billy Ayers has given us more trouble than all the rest of the boys put together. He's a regular tell-tale and a sneak, and even the Doctor says that sometimes he thinks he ought to send him home for the good of the school. Well, this afternoon we thought we'd initiate him into the WOES. We went out to that old barn near the foot of Stone Hill, but the performance had not fairly begun before Hump came along and pitched in to us. During the fracas little Willie got away and started on a beeline back for the school. All you could see was a speck of dust that seemed to be

going like mad down the road. Well, while we were giving our attention to Hump, somehow he slipped and fell on an old pitch-fork tine. We had not seen the thing or we should have thrown it out. Well, it tore a hole in Hump's shoulder and that's the whole story up to date."

"Not quite all," said Stone. "Humphrey is in the infirmary, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"And what does the doctor say?"

"He doesn't think he's going to suffer very much, but he can't tell yet. You see the old pitch-fork was rusty and there may be a little danger of blood poisoning."

"Is he going to keep Hump in the infirmary?" inquired Redhead.

"Yes," answered Dick. "Dr. Lord says he wants him there for two or three days so that he will be quiet and can be watched. If there isn't any trouble by that time he will let him out. By the way, Jack," Dick added, turning to his room-mate, "did you notice that little Willie wasn't at the table to-night?"

"That's so, he wasn't," said Jack quickly. "Hold on a minute, I'm going there to find out about it."

"He's left school," exclaimed Jack when he returned to his room.

"What!" demanded Dick.

"Yes, he's packed and gone."

"Did the Doctor send him home?"

"I don't know. I know he was thinking of it pretty seriously," spoke up Dick. "I wonder if what we did to him had anything to do with his leaving the school?"

"Oh, no," laughed Stone. "He probably wanted to stay for more."

"They do sometimes," spoke up Dick sturdily. "If a fellow has any spunk he doesn't run away when the boys plague him. Besides, there isn't any fun in bothering a chap who won't pay any attention to you. But if you pointed your finger at little Willie he would begin to jump up and down in his excitement."

"I wonder if he went home without the Doctor telling him to," said Dick.

"Nobody knows," said Jack. "All we have up to date is that little Willie has gone and his place will have to be filled by some one else."

"I hope no one will ever fill it," said Dick sharply. "He was a sneak. He tried to get me into trouble—"

"And he seems to have succeeded," laughed his brother.

"Well, he did for a while," acknowledged Dick foolishly, "but I tell you that Dr. Hull knows a

thing or two and some things besides. I don't know how he found it out but he knew all about the low-down tricks that William the Small had been trying to play on me."

"What will Humphrey do to you when he comes back?" laughed Redhead.

"I suppose he'll hammer me again," said Dick ruefully. "If you're speaking to me."

"And do you intend to put up with him?" demanded his brother sharply.

"I guess the WOES will be able to handle his case," asserted Dick.

"Well," said Redhead, "if he bothers either of you any more the time has come for you to tell us. It will go hard with him if he tries to make you suffer for what has happened to him."

The following afternoon, unknown to the other boys, Dick quietly made his way to the infirmary. In his hands he carried some flowers and some chocolate éclairs. A greater tribute he was unable to pay any one and the frequency with which he lifted his package to his face betrayed something of the self-denial which the boy was practicing in taking his gifts to the infirmary.

Upon his arrival, in response to his inquiry, he was admitted to the room in which Humphrey was sitting propped up in a large chair.

"I've brought you these," said Dick bashfully.
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"Hello, Hump," said Dick shyly when he entered the room.

"Hello yourself," retorted Humphrey.

"I've brought you these," said Dick bashfully. As he spoke he placed the flowers in the hands of Humphrey and the éclairs on the table. "I don't know that they will let you eat them," began Dick. "If they don't—"

"Oh, that's all right. I'll look after them," said Humphrey quickly.

The tone of the bully's voice was so different from the one he commonly used that Dick glanced at him in surprise. He was amazed when he saw that Humphrey's eyes were glistening and that there was a new expression in his face.

"That's mighty good of you," said Humphrey slowly. "I didn't think you'd do as much for me after the way I treated you."

"Oh, that's all right," said Dick brusquely. "I suppose you know that Ayers has gone home."

"What!"

"Yes, Ayers has left school."

"Did the Doctor invite him to leave?"

"We don't know. Nothing was said about it in chapel this morning. The Doctor told the fellows that you were getting along all right."

"I am," said Humphrey. "I don't believe

there's any use in my being here now but the Doctor wants to make sure that I haven't any blood poisoning so he's having me stay. I'm glad you came, Dick, I've got something I want to tell you."

CHAPTER XXVI

CONCLUSION

DICK looked keenly into the face of the boy seated before him and did not speak.

"I have been thinking over a good many things," said Humphrey, "since I have been shut in here alone. I'm not blaming you boys for what you did to me, for in a way I brought it on myself."

"That's all right," Dick said kindly. "I guess there aren't any of the fellows that hold any grudge."

"Why did you bring me those flowers and éclairs?"

"I don't know," replied Dick in some confusion. "I felt sorry for you and then too I knew that I had a share in the performance anyway."

"Sure that's the only reason?"

"Why, yes," said Dick. "What else could there be?"

"There really isn't any reason why a fellow who has been treated by another fellow as I have

treated you ought ever to have anything more to do with him."

"That's all right," said Dick lamely again, not knowing what else to say.

"No, it isn't all right," said Humphrey. "It's all wrong. I knew I was wrong all the while, but I kept getting in farther and farther. I felt mean about it, let me tell you. I'm going to quit now."

"That's all right," repeated Dick almost mechanically.

"Yes, sir," continued Humphrey. "I'm going to quit. I'm going to be different after this. I have been a great blow, and I have picked on fellows who are younger than I am. Dr. Hull says no one but a coward ever does that, so I guess you know what I am. Dick," he added quickly, as he looked into the face of his visitor. "I have told the Doctor all about it."

"About what?"

"Why, my performances and what Ayers and I tried to get you into."

"You told him all about it?" again demanded Dick somewhat skeptically.

"Yes, I made a clean breast of it this morning. I told him the whole thing from beginning to end. I told him too that you didn't have anything to do with it, except that time when you went out

with Ayers, and that really didn't amount to much."

"What did Doctor Hull say?"

"Not very much. He patted me on the shoulder and told me that he had felt quite confident that I would somehow make a man of myself yet. My father keeps writing me letters and he wants to know what I'm going to make of myself. I suppose he means whether I'll be a lawyer or a doctor or something of that kind. Now I'm going to write him that I don't know just what I shall be, but I'm going to try to make a man of myself anyway."

"That's great!" said Dick in a low voice. The expression of his eyes was soft and it was clear that he was deeply impressed by the statement of Humphrey.

"Did the Doctor tell you why Ayers left?"

"No, he hasn't made any reference to him. He didn't say anything at the House and he didn't speak of it in chapel this morning."

"Are you sure that he really has gone?"

"No doubt about it. He has taken everything that belonged to him out of your room and Mr. McCann owns up that he has left the school. I'm sorry," continued Dick thoughtfully. "Sometimes I think that what some of us did to him may have done him a lot of harm."

"I guess not," said Humphrey. "You didn't know Ayers as I did. There isn't anything good in him. Tait School will be better off without him. He's a little sneak, and I wish I had never seen him. He used to come to me with stories about what the WOES were planning to do and of course that helped to make me worse. I'm not trying to excuse myself though," Humphrey added quickly.

"That's all right," said Dick, reverting to his favorite expression. "I hope you'll be back in the Hull House by to-morrow or next day."

When Dick arose and departed from the room he stopped a moment in the doorway and glanced back at Humphrey. It was difficult for him to believe that the boy who had been the bully of the house and whose chief delight apparently was found in hurting or tormenting the boys who were unable to fight back could be the one he had just left.

As the days passed, however, Dick and his friends discovered that Humphrey was true to his word. Indeed, before Spring came he was almost popular among the boys, who at one time had justly despised him. A great lesson, not taught in the classroom, had been learned by Humphrey, a lesson which is learned from other boys if it is ever learned at all.

When Dick departed from the infirmary and returned to the Hull House he found a note on his table from Doctor Hull informing him that immediately after the evening meal he was to report at his office.

Dick was confident that he understood what was to occur, but he did not speak even to Jack of his fears.

When the boys departed from the dining-room Dick at once made his way to the office. To his amazement he discovered that six of the WOES had preceded him there and that the coming of the three missing members was expected.

In a brief time the entire ten assembled in the office and then Dr. Hull, wheeling sharply in his chair, faced the boys.

"All of you are members of the WOES, are you not?" inquired Dr. Hull quickly.

"Yes, sir. Yes, sir," replied the boys together.

"Is there any one present who is not a member?"

"No, sir."

"Then I have something I want especially to say to you."

For a moment the Doctor was silent as he looked from one boy to another. His heavy snow-white hair, his gold-bowed spectacles, his face unwrinkled in spite of his years and above all the expression of genuine interest in his boys com-

bined to produce an impression which everyone present retained long after he departed from the room.

"The W-O-E Society," said the Doctor at last, "must be dissolved. You boys are too young to belong to any secret organization, especially to one like that. It is dangerous for you and full of peril for the other boys, to say nothing of the school. If I permit this society to continue it will hurt you and hurt the Tait School. If it were not so serious a matter I should leave it to you to settle by a vote that the fraternity should be disbanded. As it is, however, I myself must assume the entire charge. I want you one by one to come to my desk, leave your pins with me and I want every one of you to sign this paper. Long, you are the head or chief officer of the organization, I understand, and accordingly I will ask you to subscribe your name first."

Promptly Long advanced to the Doctor's side, took from his vest the little pin which had been the cause of great curiosity among the boys of the Tait School, handed it to the teacher and then taking a pen signed the following document:

"We, the undersigned pupils in the Tait School, agree to dissolve the Society or fraternity commonly called the WOES. Furthermore on our honor as gentlemen we promise that throughout our course we will not again be members of any secret organization."

Following Long the boys one by one gave up their pins and signed the document.

"Thank you, young gentlemen," said the headmaster when Sam Green, who was the tenth to sign, had attached his name to the list. "I am sure I had no need for your signatures to bring this to pass, but I am confident that you will be all the stronger from the fact of having pledged yourselves. I have no more to say to you to-night. I want to thank you, young gentlemen, for your prompt and kind response to my request."

The Doctor arose from his chair and the boys, understanding the signal for their departure, at once went to their rooms.

"I tell you," said Dick to his roommate, "Dr. Hull is the whole show. It's worth all I have to pay just to be here with him."

"He's all right," acknowledged Jack cordially. "Now the thing for us to do is to show that we mean business."

"Do you think the Doctor was right in breaking up the society?"

"Sure he was right," said Jack promptly. "You know as well as I do that we wouldn't have stopped with Hump. We would have gone on and made it hot for any fellow the boys didn't like and so I'm glad he did what he did."

In a brief time the keen excitement passed

away. The winter days provided an interest and excitement all their own. There was coasting on the long hillsides, skating on the pond, while the initiating of the newcomers into skiing was an unending delight for the older boys However, as they settled into the regular routine of the Tait School life the interest in most of the work steadily increased. Even in Mr. McCann's classes the boys found an added interest which in a measure helped to atone for the failure of that teacher to command the confidence and respect of his young charges.

With the coming of spring there was not only a deep joy in the hearts of the boys of the Hull House, arising not only from the fact that they were now loyal members of the famous old school, but there was also the added pleasure that comes with the beginning of the spring sports. There were baseball nines to be formed, tennis clubs to be organized, trials for the track to be held and many other spring-time sports that had especial attractions for the boys, whose fortunes we have followed in this story. Their new experiences, however, are no part of the present tale.

THE END

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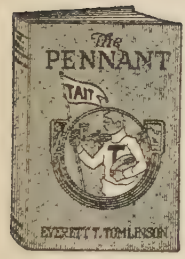

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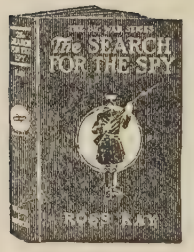

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